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RUSSIAN BUILD-UP ON THE BLACK SEA AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S.-NATO COUNTER-STRATEGY

by

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March 2017

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U.S.-NATO COUNTER-STRATEGY**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	Anti-access/area denial
BSDCC	Black Sea Defense Coordination Center
ELINT	Electronic intelligence
HUMINT	Human intelligence
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFIU	NATO Force Integration Unit
PfP	Partnership for Peace
SIGINT	Signals intelligence
SMD	Southern Military District
SNMG	Standing NATO Maritime Group
SRBM	Short range ballistic missile

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Historically, the Black Sea was the crossroads of great civilizations and also a point of interest for these players. Over the course of several centuries, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia (in its different stages of statehood) competed with each other to control the Black Sea. The key for control of the Black Sea lay in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles (the Turkish Straits), which Russia was never able to command. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was one of the potential theaters of war. Consequently, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States were paying quite a lot attention to it. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the downfall of Russia, the region lost a considerable chunk of its military importance, so it was not popping up on the top list of interests for the West. After Romania and Bulgaria became members of NATO, there was still no solid reason for the West to pay much attention to the Black Sea. The Russian Black Sea Fleet was aging and was not aggressive; Turkey had substantial force to deal with all the issues on the Black Sea; and the interests of NATO were for the most part preserved in the region.

For Moscow, the Black Sea was always highly important. It is the shortest way for Russia to reach the Mediterranean. Moreover, as Russia's only warm sea, it is basically, Russia's only access to the World Ocean. From the Russian perspective, the Black Sea also became the line of contact with NATO, whose expansion Russia is desperately trying to stop in Georgia and Ukraine. The geopolitical importance of the Black Sea also lies in the fact that it is a potential alternative energy corridor from the East and South East toward Europe.

The Russian invasion in Georgia shook the existing balance of the region. The Russian Military Modernization Program, which was initiated by Moscow after the war with Georgia and which significantly boosted the Black Sea Fleet, along with the subsequent annexation of Crimea and creation of a robust anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) bubble, dramatically changed the situation on the Black Sea in favor of Russia. Since 2008, NATO has been trying to counterbalance Russian ambitions, but Moscow

went even further and created an A2/AD bubble far from its mainland, in Syria, based on the capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet.

Right now, Black Sea is back at the top of NATO's agenda. Decisions are being made to increase military presence on the land, air, and the sea. NATO has already taken some steps to act on these decisions, but the alliance has shown no sign of a clear, sustainable, and long-term strategy toward the region. Port visits of non-littoral NATO navies, joint exercises, and short-term deployment of forces in the littoral NATO states are not the problem solvers in the long run. The aim of this thesis is to examine the roots of the Russian build-up in the Black Sea, consider its political and military nature, analyze its implications for the power projection capabilities of NATO and the United States in the region, and present recommendation for an alternative U.S.-NATO strategy.

II.   HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The Russian involvement in Black Sea politics goes back to the end of the 17th century, when Peter I (Peter the Great) started challenging Ottoman dominance over the Black Sea. In 1695–1696 Peter I attacked the Turkish fortress of Azov in the north-easternmost point of the Black Sea.[1] Regaining the Kievan Rus territories controlled by the sultan as well as the Crimea and Northern Black Sea coasts became one of the major objectives of Catherine the Great (1762–1796). During the First Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774), the Russian Army captured some important cities around and also on the Crimean Peninsula; the Navy (Baltic Fleet) sank the Turkish Fleet in the Bay of Chesme, south of Constantinople, but never tried to attack the Straits. Catherine the Great had a special plan for Constantinople. It was called "the Greek project," and it aimed to establish a Christian empire with a center in Constantinople using help from European powers, mostly the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had complicated relationship with the Ottomans as well. During the Second Russo-Turkish campaign (1787–1792) Russia annexed most of the northern coast of the Black Sea and the entire Crimean Peninsula.[2] In 1811 Russia annexed western Georgia and gained access to an even larger portion of the Black Sea coast. These territorial gains allowed Russia to establish its defensible southern borders and gave new opportunities to the Russian military and trade.[3]

From the beginning of the 19th century Russia sought to establish itself as a strong naval actor on the Black Sea and also to use its Black Sea fleet to influence political and military developments in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Complicated and constantly changing relations with the Ottoman Empire usually revolved around the problem of the Straits and access to the Mediterranean and the greater world by Russia. In 1841 in London the great powers of Europe—Russia, United Kingdom, France, Austria and Prussia—as well as the Ottoman Empire signed the convention according to which the Turkish Straits were closed to any foreign power

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[1] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 219–220.

[2] Ibid., 265–267.

[3] Ibid., 277.

during a peace time. It restricted Russia to sailing through the Straits into the Mediterranean and toward the Middle East but at the same time stopped European powers from entering the Black Sea. The Middle East remained very important for the Russian imperial foreign policy during the next decade, becoming one of the causes of the Crimean War (1853–1856).[4] In 1850 some disputes arose between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches regarding the Holy Land. Russia sided with Orthodox claims and sent a representative to Turkey for negotiations. Turkey rejected Russian interference in the internal affairs of the country, so Russia started military actions. Russia annexed the Danubian principalities and in 1853 destroyed the Turkish fleet near Sinop, in the Black Sea. France, the British Empire, and Sardinia sided with the Ottomans. War was fought on the Black Sea as well as on the Baltic Sea, White Sea, and in the Caucasus. Russians gained some fortresses in the Caucasus (Kars being the most important among them), but the technological superiority of the European powers took over and the Russians surrendered Sevastopol in 1855. As a result of that war, Russia got back the territories occupied by the French-British-Turkish coalition but agreed not to have a Navy in the Black Sea and not to build any fortifications on the shore.[5] The terms of the Treaty of Paris were humiliating for Russia, leaving much of its southern borders almost completely defenselessness. In 1877–1878 Russia fought another war with the Ottoman Empire, which originated in the Balkans but was fought on the eastern and the western coasts of the Black Sea and resulted in a major Russian victory; the Russian army was approaching Constantinople and was stopped almost at the gates of the city, in San Stefano.[6]

The Straits were highly important for Russia's foreign, military, and economic policies in the Black Sea. Russia needed the free passage through the Straits because it was the only direct link to the Mediterranean. The Turkish Straits were highly important from the economic standpoint as well. In 1910, 43 percent of all Russian exports were

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[4] Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia,* 336.

[5] Ibid., 336–340.

[6] Domenic Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution* (New York: Viking, 2015), 77.

going through the Black Sea ports. Marine transport was 25 times cheaper than using a railway for the same purpose, so the vulnerability of export routes was an important concern of the Russian government and military elite.[7] Russia entered World War I with a hope to finally seize Constantinople and put it under its control. In 1914 German battleships entered the Black Sea violating all the previously mentioned agreements and with the Ottoman naval task force attacked Russian Black Sea coasts. It was another demonstration of the continuous humiliation of Russia on the Black Sea. Germans and Turks closed and fortified the Straits and cut off Russia from the Mediterranean. In 1915 Russia raised the issue in the Entente that if it won the war, Russia was going to occupy Constantinople and establish control over the Straits, but the allies had their own terms concerning control over the Straits. The Russian plans were never realized, however, because of the revolution inside the country. In 1917 the new Bolshevik government agreed with Germany on Russian withdrawal from the coalition and ending the military actions. After the victory of the Entente, Constantinople was occupied by British troops.[8] In 1923 the Lausanne Convention was signed by the British Empire, Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Japan, Italy, Greece, Turkey, France, and Romania. According to the convention, the Turkish Straits were demilitarized, occupying forces left the straits, and the Black Sea opened for all navies, merchant and military, but with certain limitations on size and duration of stay.[9]

The Turkish government under Kemal Ataturk was not satisfied with the demilitarization of the Straits and losing fully sovereign rights over them. The most uncomfortable part of the Lausanne Convention for Turkey was the internationalization of the control over enforcement of the agreement. Ankara was looking for opportunities to make changes to the existing regime. As a result of the rise of European dictators like Hitler and Mussolini and invasion of Ethiopia by Italy, Rome became hostile to the other guarantors of the Lausanne Convention, France and the United Kingdom, so it was impossible to talk about a common enforcement and cooperation over any international

[7] Lieven, *The End of Tsarist Russia,* 75–78.

[8] Christos L. Rozakis and Petros N. Stagos, *The Turkish Straits* (Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1987), 25–26.

[9] Ferenc A. Váli, *The Turkish Straits and NATO* (Stanford, CA: Hoover, 1972), 184–195.

issue. The Turkish government finally received a quite reasonable argument to initiate a process of revision of the existing regime over the Straits.[10] The Soviet Union supported the initiative because of its desire to protect the Black Sea from foreign naval powers. In 1936, as a result of the conference in the small Swiss town of Montreux, a new convention was agreed to regarding the regime over the Straits. The Montreux convention reaffirmed the free passage of merchant and military ships through the Straits but gave an advantage to the littoral countries. Warships of the non-littoral navies must observe limits on their size, aggregative size, type, and duration of stay in the Black Sea, which are for the most part not applicable to the littoral navies. Turkey gained the right of remilitarization of the Straits according to the convention, which was also very important feature of the new agreement. Turkey received the right to stop all warships from entering or leaving the Black Sea when the country is at war or feeling threatened. Ankara no longer depended on the international enforcement of the agreement and was solely responsible for that aspect, which was a major achievement for the country.[11]

During World War II the Straits were important for the both sides of the war. At first, Stalin started negotiating with Germans about the justification of the Soviet incursion in the south to capture the Straits, as it happened during World War I.[12] Negotiations were not fruitful and soon Germany attacked the Soviet Union. At that time Turkey had the Tripartite Treaty signed with the United Kingdom and France. During the war Turkey preserved the Montreux Convention and never let German ships into the Straits, not even during the German occupation of the Black Sea shores. At the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences Stalin was continuously asking about revision of the Montreux Convention because it was not answering the needs of the new reality. At that moment the Soviet Union was directly controlling three (Russia, Ukraine, Georgia) and indirectly two more (Bulgaria, Romania) Black Sea littoral states out of a total of six countries that had access to the Black Sea. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill agreed on

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[10] Rozakis and Stagos, *The Turkish Straits*, 39–41.

[11] Váli, *The Turkish Straits and NATO*, 40–54; the Montreux Convention will be addressed in detail in Chapter IV.

[12] Váli, *The Turkish Straits and NATO*, 60.

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the necessity of revision and promised Stalin that the issue would be discussed. In parallel, the Soviet Union already officially demanded of Ankara two northern Turkish provinces and the right to place a Soviet naval base on the Straits, because according to Moscow, Turkey alone was not able to defend them. Turkey refused to fulfill the demand.[13] The Americans and British were against the Soviet idea as well. Stalin started pushing Turkey by claiming the northern part of Turkey based on their historic ownership by Georgia. Ankara got American support and reassurance. The Soviet threat pushed Ankara to join NATO in 1952, and the new Soviet government after Stalin's death declared no territorial intentions toward Turkey.[14]

The Soviet Black Sea Fleet and the Turkish Straits became an issue during the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the end of the 1960s. The Soviet Navy started assisting Arab countries in the Mediterranean and using the Straits quite actively. Turkey was not raising any objections. At that moment Turkey's relations with the United State were quite tense because Washington refused to support Ankara during the Cyprus crisis in 1963–1964. In 1966 Turkey refused an American ocean research ship entry to the Black Sea to search for a crashed U.S. plane. Soviet presence in the Mediterranean was becoming more and more significant. In the mid-1970s Moscow sent the aircraft carrier *Kiev* with dozens of fighters and gunships to the region and American hegemony become challenged. *Kiev* was not supposed to pass through the Turkish Straits because it was an aircraft carrier and ships of that type are not allowed to go through, but the Soviets claimed that it was officially listed as a cruiser, so it was sailing through the Straits without restrictions.[15]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea Fleet remained undivided and was stationed on the territory of Ukraine, in Sevastopol, though it was subordinate to both the Russian and Ukrainian presidents. The issue was resolved in 1995 when the presidents agreed to split the fleet equally; at the same time Russia bought more than half

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[13] Ibid., 55–65.

[14] Ibid., 69–80.

[15] Rozakis and Stagos, *The Turkish Straits*, 52–57.

of the Ukrainian share and finally received 82 percent of the entire fleet.[16] The Russian Black Sea Fleet remained in Sevastopol together with the Ukrainian Navy.[17]

[16] Steven Erlanger, "Russia and Ukraine Settle Dispute over Black Sea Fleet," *New York Times*, June 1995, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/10/world/russia-and-ukraine-settle-dispute-over-black-sea-fleet.html.

[17]"Угода між Україною і Російською Федерацією про параметри поділу Чорноморського флоту" [Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on Black Sea Fleet division parameters], The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, accessed February 7, 2017, http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_075; "Угода між Україною і Російською Федерацією про статус та умови перебування Чорноморського флоту Російської Федерації на території України" [Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the status and condition of Black Sea Fleet of Russian Federation in the territory of Ukraine], The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, accessed February 7, 2017, http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_076.

III. DRIVERS OF RUSSIAN BUILD-UP IN BLACK SEA REGION

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the several distinct drivers that led Russia to its decisions about the annexation of Crimea and the building up of a "fortress" in the middle of the Black Sea. Mainly, geopolitical, military, and economic drivers are analyzed. These drivers originated from very different time periods. The discussion contained in this chapter can help readers understand the Russian perspective and Russia's perception of its own security, views that differ from Western ones. As this chapter makes clear, the Russian perspective and perceptions have their own logic and are based on historic experience and geopolitical thinking.

A. GEOPOLITICAL DRIVERS

Russia's build-up on the Black Sea has its roots in the history, both early, which was already discussed, as well as modern. Based on the history analyzed in the first chapter we can conclude that Russia was never a major naval power. Russia had no warm sea ports besides those which are on the Black Sea. Most of the Russian naval port cities were not operational during the greater part of the year and at the same time were not accessible to foreign invaders to sustain large-scale invasions. Russia was always a land power; it was and still is vulnerable to huge armies accessing it from the European Plain and steppes of the Central Asia (mostly modern Kazakhstan). Those geographic features served as mobility corridors for the most significant invasions of Russia—those of the Mongols, Napoleon, and Hitler. That is why throughout its history Russia has tried to reach militarily defensible borders or to get buffers to start defense as far as possible from its major cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg). On the east and southeast, Russia has tried to reach the Tian-Shan Mountains (to avoid another invasion from the central Asian steppes); the Ural Mountains (to use as a second line of defense against Western powers in case of failure by the first one); Siberia (to make attacking worthless from the east because of its unthinkably difficult climate and lack of communications); and the Pacific Ocean. To the west, Russia tried to conquer territories up to the Carpathian Mountains and Baltic region to narrow the avenue of approach for European powers as well as to

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control as much of the European plain as possible. To the south, Russia's defensible borders depended on the control of the entire Caucasus (control over the Caucasian mountain range from the south) and the Black Sea. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Russian Geopolitical Perspective[18]

The Black Sea for Russia was not just a defense line but also the shortest way to reach the World Ocean as well.[19] The Crimean peninsula always played the major role for Russian power projection on the Black Sea. Crimea has a strategic geographic location in the Black Sea. It is embedded deep in the water mass, and Sevastopol, the major city and the main naval base of the peninsula, is located nearly in the center of the Black Sea. That is why it is often called "the unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Black Sea."

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[18] Source: George Friedman, "The Geopolitics of Russia: Permanent Struggle," Stratfor, April 2012, https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-russia-permanent-struggle.

[19] Ibid; written earlier, does not necessarily mean that every member of the Russian elite was and is thinking about the aims of their country in the geographical way. The thinking style described is the result of a bringing together of different historic experiences, lessons learned, and policies toward the different strategic directions for Russia. It is not argued that one single ruler of Russia drafted this approach and it is used by every Russian leader as a roadmap throughout the centuries (author's note).

The Turkish Straits are about 200 kilometers closer to Sevastopol (Crimea) than to Novorossiysk (the major Black Sea port of the Russian Navy on the Russian soil). Crimea is the second most important geographical area to control the Black Sea, after the Turkish Straits, which Moscow has never been able to control.

B.   COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND EXPANSION OF NATO

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union ruined all the gains Russia had achieved in securing its borders in Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and formally in Central Asia. From the beginning of the 1990s NATO started formal relations with almost all of the post-Soviet and the post-Warsaw pact countries and by 1994 unified relations with them under the umbrella of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program.[20] Russia at that time was unable to stop the process and was not even acting openly against it. In the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, which still is one of the most important documents signed by the two sides, NATO pledged that it had no intentions to place any kind of nuclear weapons or significant allied conventional forces on the territory of the new members of the alliance.[21] In March 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO, and in June of the same year,[22] the most dangerous incident occurred between Russia and NATO since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the Kosovo War, Moscow was unsatisfied that it had not received the independent peacekeeping mandate, and Russian troops marched from Serbia to Pristina Airport to block the reinforcements of the NATO troops.[23] NATO continued to accept the former members of the Warsaw Pact and also the Soviet Union to the alliance. In 2002 the alliance invited another seven Eastern European countries to join NATO, including the post-Soviet Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Black Sea littoral states, Romania and Bulgaria. At that time the

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[20] Michael Rühle,"NATO Enlargement and Russia: Myths and Realities," *NATO Review*, July 2014, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Nato-enlargement-Russia/EN/index.htm.

[21] "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 27, 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm.

[22] Rühle, "NATO Enlargement and Russia: Myths and Realities."

[23] Tom Mintier, et al., "Russian Troops Block NATO Forces at Pristina Checkpoint," CNN, June 13, 1999, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9906/13/kosovo.01/ .

United States was satisfied with Russian support in the War on Terror, and Moscow was enjoying more freedom in the domestic struggle against the Chechens, so Russian government officials were not making aggressive statements. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov was optimistically talking with the media about the cooperation of Russia and NATO right after NATO's invitation of the seven Eastern European countries,[24] but on the other hand, the Russian National Security Concept still listed NATO enlargement to the east as a threat. In 2004, seven countries from Eastern Europe, including Romania and Bulgaria, joined the alliance. Russia reacted with moderate displeasure; still, there was no open aggression in its official statement, which expressed concerns about possible deployment of the military infrastructure in the Black Sea states of Romania and Bulgaria.[25]

C.   WAR WITH GEORGIA AND "NEW LOOK" MILITARY REFORM

After the enlargement wave of 2004, the alliance enhanced partnership with two post-soviet countries, Ukraine and Georgia. In 2002 both countries announced their willingness to join NATO. In 2003 and 2004 in Georgia and Ukraine, respectively, "colored" revolutions brought pro-Western forces to the governments of the post-Soviet countries. Georgia accelerated the pace of its movement toward NATO and signed the IPAP (Individual Partnership Action Plan) agreement with NATO in 2004. Two years later, in 2006, NATO offered to Tbilisi an Intensified Dialogue.[26] Ukraine started moving toward NATO as well, signing number of agreements with alliance.[27] In 2008 Ukraine

[24] "Стенограмма Выступления Министра Иностранных Дел России И.С.Иванова на Пресс-Конференции по Итогам Заседания Совета Россия-Нато" [Transcript of Speech of Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov at a Press Conference Following a Meeting of NATO-Russia Council], The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, November 23, 2002, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/rso/-/asset_publisher/0vP3hQoCPRg5/content/id/538358.

[25] "Statement by Alexander Yakovenko, the Spokesman Of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Concerning the NATO Expansion," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, March 29, 2004, http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/lt/-/asset_publisher/ePq2JfSAWgY2/content/id/479692?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_ePq2JfSAWgY2&_101_INSTANCE_ePq2JfSAWgY2_languageId=en_GB.

[26] "Relations with Georgia," NATO, last modified November 23, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm.

[27] "Relations with Ukraine," NATO, last modified November 22, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm.

officially declared that Kiev had no intention of prolonging the lease of the Sevastopol Naval Base and that the Russian Black Sea Fleet needed to leave Ukraine by the end of the existing agreement, May 2017,[28] which was catastrophic from the perspective of Moscow. In April 2008 at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Georgia and Ukraine did not receive the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for further and deeper integration, but in the official declaration it was stated that "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO."[29] It is impossible to assess with a high level of certainty whether the refusal to grant the MAP encouraged Russia to attack Georgia, but within a few weeks a Russian fighter shot down a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle over the Abkhazian region[30] Moscow never confirmed the attack, which could be considered the first direct military engagement before the war.

The war itself started in August 2008 and lasted for five days. With the military invasion in Georgia, Russia was trying to achieve several goals:

- To stop Georgia from entering NATO;

- To try to take control over the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines, or at least make them look unreliable for the West;

- To send a signal to Ukraine that further aspirations to join NATO might be costly;

- To warn NATO that further expansion to the east would be unacceptable to Moscow.[31]

28 "МИД: Украина не рассматривает вопрос о продлении пребывания ЧФ РФ" [Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Ukraine Is not Considering an Extension of Russian Black Sea Fleet Stay], *УНИАН*, May 28, 2008, http://www.unian.net/politics/119286-mid-ukraina-ne-rassmatrivaet-vopros-o-prodlenii-prebyivaniya-chf-rf.html.

29 "Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008," NATO, May 8, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

30 "Russian Jet Shoots Georgian Drone—Reuters," YouTube video, posted by "Strasbourgeois," April 21, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNpABtIKERg.

31 Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and Georgia War: Lessons and Implications,* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 1–17, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub1069.pdf.

From a military standpoint, Russia demonstrated its political readiness to act; however, it also demonstrated its inability to sufficiently conduct joint operations, a lack of robust intelligence, a low level of mobility, the poor condition of its equipment, and problems in command and control and technological backwardness. Even though Russia won the war and achieved most of its goals, its performance became the reason for harsh criticism both at home and abroad.[32] Right after the war with Georgia, a decision was made about the radical reformation of the Russian Armed Forces. This reformation, called the "New Look," was undertaken by the Defense Minister Anatoly Serdiukov (2008–2012), and it was intended to modernize the equipment and systems, reorganize the entire command and control chain, and transform the Russian military from a mobilization-based, huge, low readiness, and ineffective force into a smaller, more mobile, flexible, combat-ready and well equipped one. Services almost lost their operational control over the forces and their major responsibility became providing trained, educated, and equipped forces to the newly created four military districts, instead of the old six. The military district became some kind of joint force command responsible for the operational control over forces during peace and for planning and execution of operations in wartime. The Land Forces structure was reorganized from the division-regiment system to the army-brigade one. The brigade received a lot of organic firepower, mobility, and ability to conduct operations autonomously. The skeleton-strength mobilization style units were abolished, and the Russian military started moving toward being a more adequate and effective force to deal with more realistic scenarios of fighting small regional conflicts near Russian borders instead of centering on Cold War era apocalyptic scenarios. Command structures were reduced dramatically in size and number. Special operations became one of the major fields for improvements.[33]

The pace and radical nature of the reforms were unusual for Russia and were met by resistance in the officer corps, resistance that was effectively crushed by a harsh

[32] Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and Georgia War*, 22–41.

[33] Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine* (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2015), 125–127.

civilian administration, strongly backed by the president and the prime minister.[34] The Russian Navy, though, did not experience harsh reforms. Its training and logistics systems were reorganized, and most of the fighter and bomber aviation was taken away and subordinated to the Air Force. Nevertheless, all of them were soon returned to the Navy, except for the Tu-22 bombers, and the Black Sea Fleet did not go through even those minimal changes. Further, some units merged, but without internal restructuring. New units started receiving new major surface ships and submarines.[35] In 2012, Minister Serdiukov was replaced by Sergei Shoigu. He started rolling back some of the reforms, but the major direction was never questioned. Rollback mostly occurred in the education and training field. Also, some newly created brigades were disbanded and old divisions restored.[36]

D. UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

During all the reformation process, Georgia was the only direct foe of Russia in the post-Soviet space. Before the end of 2013, Ukraine was a resolved issue for Moscow. President Yanukovych had good relations with the Russian leadership and was showing no signs of anti-Russian intentions. During the military reformation, Russia dismantled almost all military units near the border with Ukraine and was building a new force quite slowly in the Western Military District. At that time, the Western front was not seen in Moscow as a potential theater of operations and most resources were concentrated toward the Southern Military District (SMD), to counter issues with Georgia and North Caucasus.[37] However, by the end of 2013 developments in Ukraine went in an unfavorable direction for Russia. In November, under Russian pressure President Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), which was considered by pro-Western Ukrainians who were hoping for the better future of the country. Strong protests were sparked in the center of Kyiv, which continued for a couple of months as an armed fight between government forces and the armed

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[34] Howard and Pukhov, *Brothers Armed*, 92–95.

[35] Ibid., 114–115.

[36] Ibid., 117–119.

[37] Ibid., 99.

opposition. These events resulted in the collapse of the Yanukovych regime and installation of the new interim government on February 27, 2014.[38] During that time Russia was already preparing for action in Crimea. Moscow was on the brink of losing all of Ukraine as well as the most important warm sea port of Sevastopol, which was something unacceptable for the Russian leadership. In response to the nationalist rhetoric of the new Ukrainian political elite and initiation of the rollback of the language law (giving state status to the Russian language in predominantly Russian speaking regions of Ukraine), separatist demonstrations started in the autonomous republic. After installation of the new government "Crimean Self-Defense Forces" started recruitment of the local population, seizing government buildings and military installations. During the next several days it became clear that well-equipped and well-trained undefined personnel actually were from the Russian Special Forces and the Marine units carrying out well-planned and coordinated covert operations. The new government was unable to act and resist; readiness of the Ukraine's Armed Forces was extremely low, and the government was not yet consolidated.[39] On March 18, President Putin of Russia officially declared the annexation of Crimea, based on the referendum held during the process of occupation.[40] Violent separatist conflicts started in the eastern part of Ukraine, in Lugansk and Donetsk provinces. According to the Western and Ukrainian sources separatists were supported by Russia with equipment, training, personnel, materials and money.[41]

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[38] Steven Woehrel, *Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. RL33460) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc463191/m1/1/high_res_d/RL33460_2014Sep04.pdf.

[39] Howard and Pukhov, *Brothers Armed*, 159–173.

[40] Президент России [President of Russia], "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации" [Address by the President of the Russian Federation], March 18, 2014, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20603.

[41] "Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the Level of Heads of State and Government," NATO, July 9, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133173.htm?selectedLocale=en.

E. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES

Following the annexation of Crimea, the United States and EU imposed sanctions against Russia (mostly against individuals, the financial sector, and state-owned companies). According to the official position of the U.S. Department of State, the

> United States has steadily increased the diplomatic and financial costs of Russia's aggressive actions towards Ukraine. We have designated a number of Russian and Ukrainian entities, including 14 defense companies and individuals in Putin's inner circle, as well as imposed targeted sanctions limiting certain financing to six of Russia's largest banks and four energy companies. We have also suspended credit finance that encourages exports to Russia and financing for economic development projects in Russia, and are now prohibiting the provision, exportation, or reexportation of goods, services (not including financial services), or technology in support of exploration or production for deepwater, Arctic offshore, or shale projects that have the potential to produce oil in the Russian Federation, or in maritime area claimed by the Russian Federation and extending from its territory, and that involve five major Russian energy companies.[42]

The EU also imposed sanctions on Russia, targeting five major state-owned Russian banks; three major Russian energy companies; three major Russian defense companies; and prohibited export of energy and military related technology and also some other measures.[43] Russia responded with retaliatory sanctions and banned the import of certain goods from the United States, the EU, Norway, Canada, and Australia. McDonald's restaurants closed in Russia, and Moscow threatened Washington with a ban on sales of rocket engines, the import of which the United States later banned itself.[44] The Russian economy received a strong shock from the sanctions in combination with falling prices of oil, which together with natural gas accounts for about 70 percent of Russian exports and for about half of its budget revenues. During the second half of 2014 the ruble lost about half of its value. Capital outflows more than doubled in comparison

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[42]"Ukraine and Russia Sanctions," U.S. Department of State, accessed February 7, 2017, http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerussia/.

[43] "EU Sanctions against Russia over Ukraine Crisis," European Union Newsroom, accessed February 7, 2017, https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu_sanctions_en.

[44] Rebecca M. Nelson, *U.S. Sanctions on Russia: Economic Implications* (CRS Report No. R43895) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), 7, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43895.pdf.

with preceding years. Huge financial reserves helped Moscow to somehow reduce the shock to its state companies, the financial and political elite, and partially the population, but negative trends continued in its economy, causing more political tensions with the West.[45] President Putin announced the necessity of strengthening military forces on the peninsula because of the threat posed by activation of NATO forces near the Russian borders.[46]

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[45] Ibid., 7–10.

[46] "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации," [Address by President of Russian Federation]. Президент России [President of Russia].

IV.   NATURE OF RUSSIAN BUILD-UP

The military build-up of Russia on the Black Sea is a complex phenomenon and does not only mean an acquisition of more vessels for the Black Sea Fleet. The build-up is an aggregate of processes and results from material and non-material changes. It contains land, air, and missile capabilities, which were put in place in a phased manner, starting from the initiation of the largest military reform of the Russian Armed Forces since the creation of the Red Army, as well as fundamental changes in structure and strategic/operational/tactical approaches. The "New Look" reform brought new assets to the land forces dislocated in the Black Sea region; new air assets in the area and later new naval vessels started to boost the maritime potential of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Besides the procurement of the new equipment, the training hours were dramatically increased and contributed to the high readiness of forces. The new command and control structure and restructured major units contributed to the build-up as well. Later, the re-creation of the naval taskforce in the Mediterranean showed the increased ambitions and, more importantly, capabilities of Russia to conduct and sustain maritime and air operations quite far from the mainland. It also demonstrated Moscow's ability to project power through the Turkish Straits as well as a quite innovative version of A2/AD tactics, which in simplistic terms can be described as an ability to achieve superiority over stronger adversaries in the limited space and time through concentration of the most capable forces in a critically important geographical region. The last phase of the build-up started with the annexation of Crimea and the creation of the full-scale A2/AD bubble, much stronger than the one in Syria. This full-scale A2/AD bubble covers almost the entire Black Sea and stretches even over the Turkish Straits.[47]

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[47] Janusz Bugajski and Peter Doran, *Black Sea Imperatives Ensuring NATO Security and American Interests for the Incoming U.S. Administration,* Strategic Report No. 3 (Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2016), 10–12.

A. REFORMATION OF THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES AND SOUTHERN MILITARY DISTRICT

In 2010, a major change in the organization of the Russian Armed Forces occurred—four new military districts were created, instead of the former six; one of them, the SMD, became responsible for the strategic southern and southwestern direction. It united the land and the air forces stationed on its territory as well as the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla. Basically, the territory of the military district includes all the land between the Black and the Caspian Seas, north to the Caucasus mountain range and the northern shores of the both seas, as outlined in Figure 2.[48]

Figure 2. Russia's Military Districts[49]

Strategic direction, which is the responsibility of the SMD, was at that time of major importance for Moscow because of the recent war with Georgia and terrorist

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[48] "Исполнилось 5 лет со дня образования Южного военного округа" [Five Years Have Passed since the Establishment of Southern Military District], Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, October 7, 2015, http://syria.mil.ru/news/more.htm?id=12060044@egNews.

[49] Source: "Russia's Military Districts," Stratfor, February 27, 2014, https://www.stratfor.com/sites/default/files/main/images/Russia_military_districts2.jpg.

activity in the Northern Caucasus. The district was receiving a majority of the modernized and new equipment. The district aggregated the 49th and 58th combined armies, the 4th air and air defense command, the Black Sea Fleet and Caspian Flotilla, also the 4th and 7th military bases on the occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the 102th military base in Gyumri, Armenia. Rearmament of the military district started right after the announcement of the reorganization of the Russian military. According to General Galkin, the commander of SMD in 2012, before 2008 the percentage of the modern equipment in SMD was 10–15 percent, which as of 2012 had increased to 70 percent in selected areas, such as artillery, air defense, automobile technique, small arms, etc. The land component received modernized T-72 and new T-90 main battle tanks, modernized BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles and BTR-82A armored personnel carriers, and new self-propelled artillery. The air component received new MI-28 gunships and Su-35 fighters. Newly introduced command and control equipment was the first major upgrade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. SMD received much more training hours than before, and more contract personnel and improved logistical systems were achieved by outsourcing a major part of the logistical system and employing civilian contractors.[50] A major change from the older system was giving autonomy to the military districts. Historically, the Russian and Soviet military systems were highly centralized. Newly created military districts received control over Interior Ministry troops, Emergency Situations Ministry capabilities, and the Border Guard assets besides military land, air, and naval units. This new structure made the organization more effective and flexible, because districts no longer needed to ask the service command in the capital for combat service support during combat operations.[51] In 2012 after a General of the Army Shoigu assumed the position of the minister of defense from the most controversial minister, Anatoly Serdiukov, the reformation process continued, but it was less radical and rolled back some changes done by his predecessor. During the period of 2013–2016 in SMD 4, new divisions, 9 brigades, and 22 regiments were created,

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[50] Александр Безменов, " Стратегическое Направление"[Strategic Direction], *Российская Газета,* May 2, 2012, https://rg.ru/2012/05/02/reg-ufo/opk.html.

[51] Athena Bryce-Rogers, "Russian Military Reform in the Aftermath of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War," *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 3 (2013): 358.

including two Iskander short range ballistic missile (SRBM) brigades, contract personnel was doubled, about 4000 modern pieces of equipment were introduced into the service, and air defense capabilities were enhanced with the help of new systems, especially the most modern S-400s.[52]

B.   RE-CREATION OF THE NAVAL TASKFORCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In June 2013, Army General Shoigu reported to President Putin about the formation of the staff and the operational command of the permanent task force of the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean, according to the decision made earlier in March. According to the minister, the task force was assigned to that geographical region to "defend national interests of Russia." The operational-level goal for Russia was to defend its ally Bashar Assad and its only foreign naval base in Syria as its last footprint in the region. Strategically Moscow was willing to return as a major power on the world political stage. Initially it was planned to have about ten ships in the task force from the Black Sea, the Northern, and the Baltic fleets. The task force was assembled to be able to:

- Gather intelligence

- Provide air defense

- Provide missile defense (future)

- Conduct anti-submarine warfare

- Conduct humanitarian operations

- Conduct search and rescue operations

The task force was created as an analogy to the Soviet 5th Operational Squadron that was active during the Cold War. The new task force started operating under the

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[52]"В Москве Состоялось Заседание Коллегии Министерства Обороны России" [College of the Ministry of Defense of Russia Met in Moscow], Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, July 27 2016, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12090963@egNews.

authority of the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, was divided into four tactical groups and was intended to operate in the eastern part of the Mediterranean.[53]

Russia demonstrated the political effectiveness of its naval task force quite soon, during the crisis of August 2013, when the United States, the United Kingdom, and France were quite close to striking government targets in Syria. On August 21, 2013, a strong chemical attack happened in Syria and the Western powers blamed the Assad regime for launching it against his own population. British, French, and U.S. leaders were supporting a limited air strike against Assad. Problems in the coalition started when the British parliament refused to support the decision of Prime Minister Cameron and London canceled the military option.[54] Meanwhile, on August 29, according to unofficial information, Moscow decided to send two additional warships to the Syrian shores with missile and anti-submarine capabilities.[55] On August 31, President Obama made a statement and changed the course of action. Obama declared that he would have to ask Congress to approve his military action against Assad's regime;[56] however, he had authority to launch it without lawmakers. There is no clear evidence that decision was changed because of the Russian military deployment. Low domestic support for the actions, the refusal of British Parliament, and the legacy of the 2011 Libyan air campaign were quite significant factors for the change in the course of action, but the first and third of these factors were not new. Thus, without considering the Russian build-up it looks like the decision of the British Parliament was the only decisive reason. Analysis of the events of the last days of August 2013 suggests that significant Russian concentration played at least a secondary role in the U.S. decision-making process during the crisis. High-ranking Russian officials have often stated that Russia saved Syria and the entire

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[53] "Владимир Путин Посетил Центральный Командный Пункт Вооруженных Сил РФ"[Vladimir Putin Visited Central Command Post of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation], Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, June 6, 2013, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11769044@egNews.

[54] Paul Lewis, "US Attack in Syria Delayed After Surprise U-Turn from Obama," *Guardian*, August 31, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/31/syrian-air-strikes-obama-congress.

[55] Timothy Heritage, "Russia Sends Warships to Mediterranean as Syria Tension Rises," Reuters, August 29, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-russia-navy-idUSBRE97S0AK20130829.

[56] Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Syria," The White House Office of the Press Secretary, August 31, 2013, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria.

Middle East from another U.S.-led invasion. Defense Minister Shoigu stated in 2016 that Russian President Putin saved Syria by convincing Obama to accept the Russian plan of chemical disarmament.[57]

C.   OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA AND BLOCKADE OF THE UKRAINIAN NAVY

The most important stage of the Russian build-up in the Black Sea started with the occupation of Crimea and the blockade of the Ukrainian Navy ships. During the operation of the seizing of Crimea, the Russian Navy blockaded most assets of the Ukrainian Navy in Donuzlav Lake, in the southern military base on the Crimean peninsula. Most of these assets were not properly maintained and were not fully operational, and their crews were not well trained and combat-ready. Just a few navy ships survived only because they were outside the lake, and most of the Coast Guard vessels also managed to escape to different ports of Ukraine controlled by Kyiv, mostly Odessa. Later, the newly appointed Chief of the Ukrainian Navy, Rear Admiral Denis Berezovsky defected and joined the self-proclaimed Crimean government.[58] After establishing full military control over the peninsula, Russia started building up and turning Crimea into a fortress.

D.   RUSSIAN BUILD-UP ON THE BLACK SEA AND RUSSIAN A2/AD STRATEGY

All actions described earlier are part of a broad Russian strategy in the region. Russia intends to prevent NATO from moving forward to further strengthen relationship with non-member allies like Georgia and Ukraine and at the same time to demonstrate the vulnerability of NATO borders and the inability of the alliance to ensure the security of the members bordering the Black Sea. Russia wants to prevent Romania and Bulgaria from making steps critically unfavorable to Moscow by pressuring Sofia and Bucharest

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[57] Михаил Алаеддин, " Шойгу Заявил, что Россия Спасла Сирию от Удара 624 Крылатых Ракет НАТО" [Shoigu Announced that Russia Has Saved Syria from the Attack of 624 Cruise Missiles of NATO], *Россия сегодня*, August 15, 2016, https://ria.ru/syria/20160815/1474385264.html.

[58] Howard and Pukhov, *Brothers Armed*, 167–168.

using indirect military actions and energy resources.[59] NATO is quite limited in its actions in the Black Sea because of the Montreux Convention (1936), which restricts freedom of movement of the non-littoral navies through the Turkish Straits.[60]

The Black Sea Fleet, which is a part of SMD, was one of the most important parts of the naval modernization program. Seventy-five percent (i.e., 12 vessels including surface ships and submarines) out of all new ships received by the Black Sea Fleet after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1992–2016) were received after the war with Georgia during the period of 2009–2016, which is three times more than during 1992–2008. It is important to mention this includes two brand new Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates (equipped with modern Kalibr cruise missiles) and four new diesel submarines.[61] As a result, Russia seeks for the Black Sea Fleet to have an ability to detect and destroy enemies before they reach the proximity of Crimea, somewhere near the Turkish Straits. According to the Chief of the General Staff, Army General Gerasimov, the Black Sea Fleet possesses all the capabilities to detect and destroy an enemy in the range of 500 kilometers (km), mentioning Kalibr missiles and Bastion coastal defense systems.[62] Table 1 is providing information about most important naval assets of Russian Black Sea Fleet.

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[59] Bugajski and Doran, *Black Sea Imperatives*, 7–8.

[60] Ibid., 11.

[61] "Боевые корабли Российской Федерации—2016" [Combat Ships of Russian Federation—2016], *Russiaships.info*, August 16, 2016, http://russianships.info/today/.

[62] "Генштаб: ЧФ России Может Уничтожить Противника еще при Выдвижении с Баз" [General Staff of Russia: Black Sea Fleet Can Destroy an Enemy before Leaving Home Bases], *Россия Сегодня,* September 14, 2016, https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160914/1476907926.html.

Table 1.   Major Naval Assets of the Russian Black Sea Fleet[63]

Type	Class	QTY	Major Armament 1	Major Armament 2	Year of Commission	Displacement
Guided missile Cruiser	*Slava*-class	1	P-1000 Vulkan anti-ship missile (range: 700km)	S-300F air defense missile system	1983	11280 tons
Guided missile destroyer	Kushin Class	1	X-35 Uran missiles (range 260km)		1969	4460 tons
Frigate	Admiral Grigorovich Class	2	Kalibr missiles (range approx. 300km)		2016-	3860 tons
Diesel-electronic submarine	Project 636 Varshavyanka	6	Kalibr missiles (range approx. 300km)		2014-	3100 tons (Submerged)

From the aviation side, after the annexation of Crimea, three Russian Air Force regiments were deployed on the peninsula partially armed with comparably modern Su-30 jets and MI-35 gunship helicopters. Air defense capabilities of the task force placed on the peninsula became qualitatively better after deploying an unknown number of the most modern Russian mid- to long-range air and missile defense systems, the S-400 Triumf (NATO reporting name: SA-21 Growler) with a range of 400 km[64] and Pantsir-S1 (NATO reporting name: SA-22 Greyhound) for force protection. The S-300 batteries still remain in service.[65] Bastion-type mobile coastal defense missile systems are deployed on the peninsula as well. They have a range of 300 km and possess advanced technology in missile communications and information sharing about the target during flight toward it.[66]

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63 "Черноморский Флот" [Black Sea Fleet], *KCHF.ru*, last modified 2017, http://www.kchf.ru/ship/today/today.htm.

64 "Характеристики С-400 'Триумф'" [Characteristics of S-400 "Triumph"], *Риа Новости*, November 25, 2015, http://ria.ru/infografika/20150918/1260419491.html.

65 "Осиное гнездо: Что военные развернули в Крыму за два года" [A Hornet's Nest: What Did Militaries Deployed in Crimea for Two Years], *Lenta.ru*, March 16, 2016, https://lenta.ru/articles/2016/03/16/crimea/.

66 "Российский «Бастион» Против Кораблей НАТО: Схватка Ракет и Кораблей" [Russian "Bastion" against NATO Ships: Battle of Missiles and Ships], *Звезда,* March 25, 2015, http://tvzvezda.ru/news/forces/content/201503250737-v15x.htm.

With a new configuration of forces, Russia is controlling almost all airspace over the Black Sea with its air defense and aviation assets based in Crimea. Russia also covers almost the entire Black Sea surface with its anti-ship missiles, mainly the P-1000 Vulkan, which has a range of about 550–800 km according to different sources[67] and is based on the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, the guided missile cruiser *Moskva*. Apart from that, most of the ships in the Black Sea Fleet are armed with robust anti-ship missiles and torpedoes of different ranges. No country in the region possesses any comparable capabilities. See Figure 3.
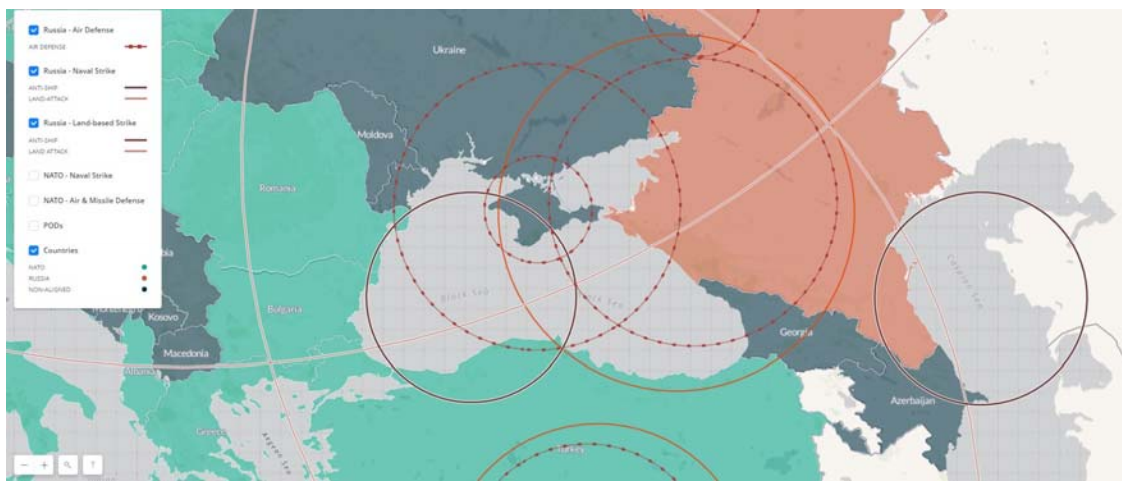
Figure 3. Russian A2/AD Capabilities in the Black Sea[68]

Weapon systems placed on the peninsula and the capabilities of the military task force deployed in this geographical region including sea, air, and land based capabilities are well suited to conduct robust A2/AD operations against superior force. According to the official U.S. Department of Defense document, *Air-Sea Battle—Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges,* an anti-access operation is an "action intended to slow deployment of friendly forces into a theater or cause forces to operate from distances farther from the locus of conflict than they would

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67 "Antiship Cruise Missile 3M-70 'Vulcan,'" Strela Production Association, May 14, 2009, http://www.pa-strela.com/index.php/en/products/military-goods/2013-09-16-07-38-07.

68 Source: "The Russia—NATO A2AD Environment," CSIS, January 30, 2017, https://missilethreat.csis.org/russia-nato-a2ad-environment/.

otherwise prefer. A2 affects movement to a theater."[69] According to the same document an area denial operation is the "action intended to impede friendly operations within areas where an adversary cannot or will not prevent access. AD affects maneuver within a theater."[70] The Black Sea Fleet and forces deployed on the Crimean peninsula might be seen mostly as A2/AD capability rather than as a naval power intended to compete with NATO and U.S. naval forces in the Mediterranean. The average age of Russian Black Sea Fleet vessels is 25 years. In the 1990s they had no appropriate sustainment circle, so old vessels have a lot of operational problems and it is not possible to effectively use them far from the homeport.[71] On the other hand, Russian ships have robust missile capabilities, which give the Russian Navy the ability to target any naval vessel and air asset inside the Black Sea.[72] The Black Sea Fleet assets, land-based Bastion type anti-ship missiles[73] combined with the newest S-400 air defense systems and air force deployed in Crimea constitutes a more defensive than offensive task force. Russia successfully tested its A2/AD in Syria on a smaller scale. Deployment of tactical aviation, the land-based anti-ship missiles, the air defense capabilities, and the couple of frigates gave Russia a substantial amount of control over the Eastern Mediterranean.[74]

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[69] U.S. Department of Defense, *Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges,* May 2, 2013, http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/ASB-ConceptImplementation-Summary-May-2013.pdf.

[70] Ibid.

[71] "Боевые корабли Российской Федерации—2016" [Combat Ships of Russian Federation—2016], Russiaships.info.

[72] "Antiship Cruise Missile 3M-70 'Vulcan,'" Strela Production Association.

[73] "Подвижный береговой ракетный комплекс 'Бастион' с ПКР 'Яхонт'" ["Bastion" Mobile Coastal Defense Missile Complex with "Yakhont" Anti-ship Missiles], Акционерное общество "Военно-промышленная корпорация "Научно-производственное объединение машиностроения" [Joint Stock Mashinostroyenia Military and Industrial Corporation], September 16, 2016, http://www.npomash.ru/download/mobile_ru.pdf.

[74] Jonathan Altman, "Russian A2/AD in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Growing Risk," *Naval War College Review*, 3–5, https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/4ac8b59c-4634-44b3-af06-dee0203d6c67/Russian-A2-AD-in-the-Eastern-Mediterranean---A-Gro.aspx; Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Syria."

V. POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE BLACK SEA LITTORAL STATES

There are two major players on the Black Sea, Turkey and Russia. All other countries have much fewer capabilities to influence regional security arrangements. Nevertheless, as Romania and Bulgaria are NATO members, they can also influence the region by encouraging the alliance to be more involved in Black Sea matters. By contrast, Ukraine and especially Georgia have limited ability to make changes in the Black Sea security environment, but they have strong motivation to do so. As direct victims of Russian military aggression, these two countries have greater urgency than others to balance Russia's power on the Black Sea.

A. TURKEY

Turkey is a key player in the Black Sea, but it is constrained by foreign political, military, and internal issues. Kurdish separatism, terrorism, internal political instability, as well as energy and economic dependence on Russia, and, of course, the war in Syria are making Turkey increasingly vulnerable.

1. Political Situation and Regional Policy

As described in Chapter I, Turkey (as the Ottoman Empire) historically was the major player in the Black Sea. The Montreux Convention signed in 1936 by Turkey, Australia, Bulgaria, Greece, France, Japan, Romania, Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union restricted the right of non-littoral navies to enter the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits without permission from Turkey. Specifically, according to the Montreux Convention:

- Aircraft carriers, whether belonging to riparian states or not, can in no way pass through the Turkish Straits;

- Only submarines belonging to riparian states can pass through the Turkish Straits, for the purpose of rejoining their base in the Black Sea for the first time after their construction or purchase, or for the purpose of repair in dockyards outside the Black Sea;

- The total number and the maximum aggregate tonnage of all foreign naval forces which may be in course of passage through the Turkish Straits are limited to 9 and 15.000 tons respectively;

- The maximum aggregate tonnage which non-riparian States may have in the Black Sea is 45.000 tons;

- In this regard, the maximum aggregate tonnage of the vessels of war that one non-riparian State may have in the Black Sea is 30.000 tons;

- Vessels of war belonging to non-riparian states cannot stay more than 21 days in the Black Sea;

- Passages through the Turkish Straits are notified to Turkey through diplomatic channels prior to intended passages. The notification time is 8 days for vessels of war belonging to riparian States, and 15 days for those of non-riparian States.[75]

The Convention is currently valid and is the major document regulating the right of passage through the Straits. It gives Turkey strong leverage and makes it a critically important player in the region. In the 1990s, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea was for the most part left to Turkey. Russia was not a significant adversary anymore, and Romania and Bulgaria were on their way toward the West, so there were no real challenges in the region that NATO and the United States urgently needed to address. Ankara was the author of the most significant initiatives on the Black Sea in the 2000s. In 2001 a multinational naval on-call peace task force "The Black Sea Naval Co-Operation Task Group-BLACKSEAFOR" was created "for the purpose of enhancing peace and stability in the Black Sea area, by increasing regional co-operation and improving good relationship."[76] Later, in 2004, Turkey initiated Operation Black Sea Harmony, which is the continuation of NATO Operation Active Endeavor activated after 9/11 to ensure security on the Mediterranean.[77] Both of those initiatives were covering most of the littoral states, including Russia. The Black Sea had no major security challenges that could be addressed in that format and neither of the initiatives had serious

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[75] "Implementation of the Montreux Convention," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/implementation-of-the-montreux-convention.en.mfa.

[76] "BLACKSEAFOR," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/blackseafor.en.mfa.

[77] Ibid.

influence on the force balance in the region. At most, they aimed to underline the role of Turkey on the Black Sea. Turkey once more emphasized its role in 2008, during the Russian invasion in Georgia, when based on the Montreux Convention Ankara refused to let large American hospital ships through the Turkish Straits and for some time stopped other American ships that were moving toward Georgia on a humanitarian mission.[78] It was an existentially dangerous step for Georgia in the given moment and a dangerous step for the Western interests in the region.

Turkey is a NATO member state but its foreign policy is quite sensitive to its fragile internal political situation, Kurdish separatism, developments in Syria, and pressure from Russia. Russia is highly important source of energy for the Turkish economy. Turkey was getting 55 percent of its natural gas and 12 percent of its oil from Russia in 2015.[79] Turkey and Russia have been developing quite significant energy projects together since 2014, when President Putin announced the Turkish Stream gas pipeline project instead of the canceled South Stream project, which was intended to bring Russian gas to Southern Europe bypassing Ukraine.[80] In November 2015, a Turkish F-16 shot down Russian Su-24 aircraft allegedly violating Turkish airspace from Syria. Relations between the two countries became extremely tense. Moscow sent off Turkish nationals, banned Turkish exports, and advised its citizens not to spend their vacation in Turkey.[81] On the wave of tensions, President Erdogan called on NATO to make more proactive steps to prevent the Black Sea from becoming a "Russian lake."[82] At that point, Turkey changed its historic stance toward security arrangements in the Black Sea. Historically, Turkey was against outside intervention in the Black Sea affairs, pushing its

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[78] Michael R. Gordon, "Pledging to Leave Georgia, Russia tightens its Grip," *New York Times,* August 17, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/18/world/europe/18georgia.html.

[79] "Turkey's Energy Profile and Strategy," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa.

[80] "TurkStream," Gazprom Export LLC, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.gazpromexport.ru/en/projects/.

[81] "Turkey's Downing of Russian Warplane - What We Know," *BBC News*, December 1, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34912581.

[82] "We Become a Hostage to Others When We don't Write Our Own History," Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, February 25, 2017, http://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/71141/kendi-tarihimizi-yazmayinca-baskalarina-esir-oluyoruz.html.

role as a key player in the region and asking NATO and the United States to give the means to Ankara to project allied interests. The statement of Turkish President Erdogan surfaced a new vision of Turkey regarding security of the Black Sea, with active involvement of the non-littoral NATO members.[83] However, Ankara appeared unable to withstand Russian pressure, and in June 2016, President Erdogan sent a letter to President Putin, which according to most media sources was interpreted as an apology.[84] One month later a military coup attempt happened in Turkey, which dramatically shaped the internal and foreign policy of the country. Erdogan blamed Fethullah Gülen, an influential Turkish cleric living in the United States, with orchestrating the coup, ordered the arrest of thousands of soldiers and police officers, and suspended about 100,000 government employees tied with Gülen's movement known as Hizmet. A number of news media outlets were closed as well by the government. Ankara asked Washington to extradite Gülen and after getting a refusal started quite strong anti-Western rhetoric.[85] Society, experts, and some politicians in Turkey strongly believe that the United States and the Central Intelligence Agency were behind the coup.[86] After the coup, relations between Russia and Turkey started warming quite intensively. In October 2016, Putin visited Turkey to sign the Turkish Stream deal with President Erdogan. (More precisely, this deal is one string of four planned and intended for Turkish consumption, not for export.) Putin also sought to negotiate further plans of cooperation (including construction of a nuclear power plant in Turkey). The Turkish Stream gas pipeline is extremely important for both countries. Turkey is trying to strengthen its energy supplies as well as its position as an energy hub. Russia wants to create an alternative route bypassing Ukraine to manipulate supplies without affecting the European receivers of the

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[83] Octavian Manea, "Is NATO Ready to Improve Its Naval Capabilities?," *Defence Matters*, June 30, 2016, http://defencematters.org/news/nato-improve-naval-capabilities/902/.

[84] Andrew Roth and Erin Cunningham, "Turkish President Apologizes for Downing of Russian Warplane Last Year," *Washington Post*, June 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkey-apologizes-for-shooting-down-russian-warplane-last-year/2016/06/27/d969e0ea-3c6d-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41decb_story.html?utm_term=.80c58256655e.

[85] "Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt: All You Need to Know," *Aljazeera*, December 29, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/turkey-failed-coup-attempt-161217032345594.html.

[86] Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsuaug, "Turks Can Agree on One Thing: U.S. Was behind Failed Coup," *New York Times*, August 2, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/03/world/europe/turkey-coup-erdogan-fethullah-gulen-united-states.html.

energy and at the same time increase dependence of the EU on its natural gas against the diversification efforts of Brussels. At the moment, worsened relations between the West and Moscow and Ankara have created political gravity between them, but Moscow and Ankara have fundamental strategic disagreements, which at the given moment, are best visible in Syria. Russia is directly backing President Assad's regime and indirectly Kurds, while Turkey is supporting Sunni rebel groups and considers strengthening of the Kurds near its border as a major threat to its statehood.[87] Despite tactical cooperation with Russia in Syria, strategic interests remain highly disharmonious, so it cannot be seen as a significant shift.[88] Right now Turkey is not expressing any strong opinion about Black Sea security and is trying to balance between the strategically important but worsened relations with the West and improving tactical ties with Russia.

2. Military Capabilities

Turkey, together with Russia, is the strongest power in the Black Sea. Turkey has a quite traditional navy with good platforms armed mostly with American Harpoon anti-ship missiles. The Turkish Navy is divided into two, the Northern and Southern sea area commands.[89] The Turkish Navy operates 18 frigates. The oldest ones are the eight ex-Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided-missile frigates, with a displacement of 4100 tons and built for the U.S. Navy in 1979–1981. The frigates got some upgrades mostly of their navigation and combat management systems during their life cycle in the Turkish Navy since 1998.[90] They are equipped with Harpoon anti-ship missiles with a range of approximately 125 km (67 nmi).[91] A comparably newer class of Turkish Navy frigates is

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[87] Olesya Astakhova and Nick Tattersall, "Russia and Turkey Sign Gas Deal, Seek Common Ground on Syria as Ties Warm," *Reuters*, October 10, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-energy-summit-turkey-russia-idUSKCN12A244.

[88] Can Kasapoglu, "Operation Euphrates Shield: Progress and scope," *Aljazeera*, February 3, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/operation-euphrates-shield-progress-scope-170201133525121.html.

[89] "Organization," Turkish Naval Forces, last modified December 28, 2014, https://www.dzkk.tsk.tr/icerik.php?icerik_id=200&dil=0.

[90] Cem Devrim Yaylali, "Gabya Class (O. H. Perry)," *Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed February 26, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/gabya-o-h-perry-class/.

[91] "AGM/RGM/UGM-84 Harpoon Missile," Boeing, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.boeing.com/history/products/agm-84d-harpoon-missile.page.

the Yavuz class. The Turkish Navy possesses four ships of this class. These frigates were built by a German shipbuilder, two of them in Turkey in 1985–1988. Displacement of these frigates is 2900 tons. They are also equipped with Harpoon missiles and quite robust torpedo capabilities.[92] The Barbaros class is the most modern class of frigates in the Turkish Navy. Basically, the Barbaros class is an improved Yavuz class. Ships of that class are equipped with similar weapons like Harpoon anti-ship missiles, Sea-Sparrow anti-aircraft missiles, and Mk 46 Mod 5 torpedoes, but Barbaros-class ships are larger (displacement 3300 tons) and have more modern communication and navigation systems.[93] Turkey also operates two Ada class corvettes (in some sources listed as frigates), which are built indigenously and equipped with Harpoon missiles. Corvettes are quite new and an additional two of them are scheduled to be ready in 2019 and 2020.[94] Another six corvettes of the Turkish Navy are smaller, bought second-hand from France, built in the 1970s and equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles.[95] Nineteen missile boats, all equipped with Harpoon missiles, constitute robust fast-attack capability for the Turkish Navy.[96] The Turkish Navy has strong underwater capabilities as well. Thirteen diesel-electric submarines of German Type-209/1200 and Type-209/1400 classes are equipped by Harpoon missiles as are most of the Turkish ships.[97] The Turkish Navy is expecting new frigates and submarines, which are on order to replace aged ones. The Navy also is working on the domestically built anti-ship missile named Atmaca, which

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[92]Cem Devrim Yaylali, "Yavuz Class (MEKO 200 Track I),"*Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed February 26, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/yavuz-class-meko-200-track-i/.

[93] Cem Devrim Yaylali, "Barbaros Class (MEKO 200 Track IIA/B),"*Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed February 26, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/barbaros-class-meko-200-track-ii/.

[94] Cem Devrim Yaylali, "Ada Class (Milgem),"*Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed February 26, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/ada-class-milgem/.

[95] Cem Devrim Yaylali, Burak Class (Type A 69),"*Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed February 26, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/burak-type-a-69-class/.

[96] "Chapter Four: Europe," *Military Balance* 116, no. 1 (2016): 96, doi:10.1080/ 04597222.2016.1127564.

[97] Ibid., 95.

will be based on the Harpoon missile but will have extended range of about 200 km (120 miles).[98]

The Turkish Air Force is also highly capable and well trained. Alongside of aging F-4 and F-5 fighters, the Air Force operates about 260 F-16s of different modifications. Flying hours in the Turkish Air force (180 hours per year) are almost as high as in the leading Western militaries.[99] Turkey is part of the Joint Strike Fighter program and is planning to buy more than 100 of F-35s. A domestic company is also working on the TFX fighter program, which is planned to be introduced in 2023.[100]

The Turkish military, especially its Navy and Air Force, is a well-equipped and trained force; however, the recent coup attempt and large-scale purges afterward created doubts about morale in the armed forces and questioned the willingness of the government to put a strong emphasis on military in the near future. Arrests after the coup significantly weakened the military. For example, 265 Air Force pilots were arrested, and they will be extremely difficult to replace in the short term.[101] One hundred and forty-nine out of 325 generals and admirals of the armed forces were discharged after the coup,[102] which is a significant part of the command and control structure. A number of reforms were pushed through in a forced manner after that. The number of cabinet ministers and generals was reduced in the Supreme Military Council, and service commanders were made directly subordinate to the minister of defense instead of to the Chief of the General Staff, who also changed his subordination from the prime minister to the president. Military hospitals and shipyards switched their subordination to the

[98] Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey Advances Indigenous Missile Programs," *Defense News*, July 18, 2015, http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/land/weapons/2015/07/18/turkey-advances-indigenous-missile-programs/30236299/.

[99] Chapter Four: Europe," *Military Balance* 116, no. 1 (2016): 94–96, doi:10.1080/04597222.2016.1127564.

[100] Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey to Order New F-35 Lightning II Jets," *Defense News*, October 31, 2016, http://www.defensenews.com/articles/turkey-to-place-new-f-35-order.

[101] "Turkey's Armed Forces Chains of Command,"*Economist*, September 29, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21707953-coup-army-short-leash-chains-command.

[102] Metin Gurcan, "After Massive Purge, What's Next for Turkish Armed Forces?," *Al-Monitor*, August 1, 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2016/08/turkey-coup-attempt-major-purge-of-armed-force.html.

General Staff and were transferred to civilian standing. All military academies closed for a two-year term to be united under the new University of the National Defense, which is subordinate to the minister of defense.[103] All of this will negatively affect the command and control and warfighting capabilities of the Turkish Armed Forces. In addition, Turkey is a geographically big country, so the resources available do not necessarily mean that all of them will be dedicated to the Black Sea region.

B.   ROMANIA

Romania is getting gradually more influential in the region due to its strong relations with NATO and the number of allied units and headquarters deployed on its territory; however, Romania's military capabilities are not able to support that country's current level of ambition.

1.   Political Situation and Regional Policy

The Black Sea is of major importance for Romania. Like Bulgaria, Romania also uses the Black Sea for more than half of its foreign trade outside the EU.[104] According to the National Defense Strategy, one of the major national security objectives is "ensuring security in the Black Sea region."[105] At the same time, Romania openly declares Russia as an actor, which is an obstacle for achieving that objective:

Russia is mentioned indirectly in the Romanian White Paper on Defense as a source of threat to the nation's security:

> The creation and deployment of military structures in the proximity of Romania by some non-NATO countries, at the same time with the processes of reorganization, modernization and procurement of modern weapons systems and equipment, of development of high-mobility special forces capabilities, of military infrastructure and of intensified large-scale

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[103] Lars Haugom, "The Turkish Armed Forces Restructured," *Turkey Analyst*, September 30, 2016, https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/566-the-turkish-armed-forces-restructured.html.

[104] "Half of EU Trade in Goods Is Carried by Sea," Eurostat Press Office, September 28, 2016, 2, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7667714/6-28092016-AP-EN.pdf.

[105] "National Defense Strategy 2015–2019, A Strong Romania within Europe and the World," Romania the Presidential Administration, 2015, 9–10, http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf.

un-notified military exercises, represent factors of risk against regional security.[106]

Russian actions in the Black Sea Region, infringing upon international law, questioning international order, preserving frozen conflicts, and the annexation of Crimea have raised again NATO's awareness about fulfilling its fundamental mission; that is **collective defense**. Such actions have also raised NATO's consideration of the validity of the security arrangements agreed upon with Russia at the end of the 20th century.[107]

Based on defined strategic interest as well as threat, Romania is trying to convince NATO to be more involved in the Black Sea security environment. Bucharest pushes the alliance to reassess its perception about the importance of the region. More precisely, the stated goal is to ensure NATO presence (preferably naval) in the Black Sea.[108] This goal is being partially fulfilled. In April 2016, two U.S. F-22 Raptors, based in the United Kingdom made a surprising visit to the Romanian air base. The visit happened shortly after Russian fighters in the Baltic Sea annoyed USS Donald Cook.[109] In October, the United Kingdom made the decision to send Typhoon fighters to Romania for patrolling over the Black Sea. Poland and Canada are also going to send their aircraft to Romania. The country will also host an air force regional training center.[110]

Romania is a quite active member of NATO. It hosts several NATO installations and institutions on its territory. The NATO HUMINT Centre of Excellence is located in Romania, and has been operational since 2010. It joins the efforts of a number of nations within the alliance.[111] The year 2016 was quite intense in the relationship of NATO and

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[106] "White Paper on Defense: Romania," Ministry of National Defense, 2015, 12, http://english.mapn.ro/aboutmod/documents/carta_alba_apararii_en.pdf .

[107] Ibid., 12.

[108] Ibid., 19.

[109] Clarissa Ward, Antonia Mortensen, and Alex Platt, "U.S. Sends F-22 Warplanes to Romania," CNN, April 26, 2016, http://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/25/europe/us-deploys-fighter-jets-to-romania/index.html.

[110] Ana Maria Touma, "NATO Boosts Eastern Flank to Reassure Nervous Allies," *Balkan Insight*, October 27, 2016, quoted in "Romania and Bulgaria to Host Greater NATO Presence in the Black Sea Region," NATOsource, October 31, 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/romania-and-bulgaria-to-host-greater-nato-presence-in-the-black-sea-region.

[111] "What Is the HUMINT Centre of Excellence?," NATO HUMINT Centre of Excellence, last modified March 4, 2016, http://www.natohcoe.org/what-is-humint-centre-of-excellence/.

Romania. In May Naval Support Facility (NSF) Deveselu became operational. This facility is a component of the NATO Ballistic Missile Defense System and "consists of a fire-control radar deckhouse and an associated Aegis command, control and communications suite, and housing launch modules that contain SM-3 defense missiles."[112] The NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) and headquarters of Multinational Division South-East also became fully operational during the year.[113]

2.   Military Capabilities

At the moment Romania's military capabilities that can be used on the Black Sea are quite limited and do not match the level of political ambition. Major naval assets are two former UK Type-22 frigates with almost no mid- and long-range fire capabilities, but quite good platforms for further enhancement. Romania also possesses one domestically built (1985) Marasesti frigate with four twin launchers for P-15M Termit-M (SS-N-2C Styx) anti-ship missiles, with a range of 80 km (50 nmi). Three small missile boats are equipped with the same missiles. Four corvettes, the rest of the missile boats, and other small vessels do not possess any significant precise and long-range firepower. The Romanian Navy also operates 11 mine warfare and 14 logistical and support ships.[114] Romania is planning to modernize two former UK Type-22 frigates and procure three multi-role corvettes, which will improve its naval capabilities.[115]

The air force is in a stage of modernization. It is operating aging MIG-21 fighter jets, which have quite questionable marginal capabilities, but now that the country has started receiving 12 second-hand F-16 aircraft from Portugal, the capabilities of the Romanian Air Force will increase significantly during this year.[116]

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[112] Naval Support Facility Deveselu, U.S. Navy, https://cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnreurafswa/installations/nsf_deveselu.html.

[113] "Romanian Defense 2016," Ministry of National Defense, 2016, 6, http://www.mapn.ro/publicatii/2016/revista_2016.pdf .

[114] "Chapter Four: Russia and Eurasia," *Military Balance* 116, no. 1 (2016): 132–133, doi: 10.1080/04597222.2016.1127564.

[115] "Romanian Defense 2016," Ministry of National Defense, 8.

[116] Victor Barreira, "Romania Receives Its First F-16 fighter aircraft," *IHS Jane's 360,* September 28,2016, http://www.janes.com/article/64152/romania-receives-its-first-f-16-fighter-aircraft.

Romania is also significantly boosting its military spending. According to an internal political agreement between Romanian parliamentary parties, the country will sustain a military budget on a level of 2 percent of GDP during the next decade, starting from 2017. The decision has also been made to spend on the procurement and infrastructure of about 10.6 bln Leu ($2.5 bln) in 2016–2019.[117]

C.   BULGARIA

Bulgaria is a NATO member and is poised to play an important role in the future Black Sea security architecture. Nevertheless, its internal problems and the domestic struggle between pro-Western and pro-Russian political forces make its foreign policy unstable and hardly predictable.

1.   Political Situation and Regional Policy

The Black Sea is of vital importance for Bulgaria. About 80 percent of the goods exported and imported are shipped by the Black Sea, and seaside tourism is also very important for the economy.[118] The country is concerned with developments in the region and is demonstrating that concern in strategic-level documents. According to the paper published by the Ministry of Defense called "Bulgaria in NATO and in European Defense 2020":

> The heterogeneous regional and geostrategic interests suggest a continuation of the current conflict and confrontation in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine became the most serious threat to peace and security in Europe since World War II. They led to a serious change in the balance of power in the Black Sea region. This negative development has direct implications for Bulgaria's security.[119]

However, Bulgaria was one of the countries opposed to NATO build-up in the Black Sea. Former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov was advocating the idea of declaring

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117 "Romanian Defense 2016," Ministry of National Defense, 7.

118 Margarita Assenova, "Bulgaria's Black Sea Dilemma," *Center for European Policy Analysis,* July 20, 2016, http://cepa.org/Bulgaria-Black-Sea-dilemma.

119 "Bulgaria in NATO and in European Defense 2020," September 2, 2014, 3, http://www.government.bg/fce/001/0234/files/Vision%202020.pdf.

the Black Sea as a demilitarized zone. One reason for this is that militarization of the Black Sea could have negative effects on tourism and consequently on economy of the country.[120] Borisov is no longer in the government of the country, and the new prime minister is the more pro-Western Ognyan Gerdzhikov. Nevertheless, the new president, former chief of the Air Force, Major-General Rumen Radev, dissolved parliament and arranged for new parliamentary elections. Radev is known as a pro-Russian politician who advocates lifting sanctions imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea.[121] Supported by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, which proposed a resolution in parliament to declare the Black Sea a demilitarized zone, newly elected President R. Radev will likely seek to cease Bulgarian military buildup during his term.[122]

2. Military Capabilities

Currently the Bulgarian Navy consists of four Frigates (three of them former Wielingen-class bought second hand from Belgium), one Soviet Koni-class frigate, and three corvettes (two Soviet Pauk and one Tarantul Class). It also possesses 14 minesweepers and 14 logistical ships. In addition to these Bulgarian Navy vessels, the Bulgarian Coast Guard itself possesses 18 patrol boats of different classes. Wielingen-class corvettes are equipped with MM-38 Exocet anti-ship missiles with a range of 42 km (22.7 nm) and the Koni-class frigate has P-15M Termit-M class missiles with 80 km (43 nm) range. The Navy can be supported from the air by 16 MIG-29 fighters and approximately the same number of ground attack Su-25s.[123]

Bulgaria was and still is suffering from a lack of investments in the defense sector, which restricts the country from investing in such costly enterprises as a navy.[124] Almost all outdated ships of the Bulgarian Navy are already decommissioned, including

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[120] Assenova, "Bulgaria's Black Sea Dilemma."

[121] Daniel McLaughlin, "Bulgaria Gets Interim Government Ahead of Snap Election," *Irish Times*, January 26, 2016, http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/bulgaria-gets-interim-government-ahead-of-snap-election-1.2952398.

[122] Assenova, "Bulgaria's Black Sea Dilemma."

[123] "Chapter Four: Russia and Eurasia," 82.

[124] "Bulgaria in NATO and in European Defense 2020," 7–9.

submarines, so now the Bulgarian Navy is going to modernize its existing three Wielingen-class frigates[125] and procure two undefined type new ships from a medium-term perspective.[126] The Bulgarian Ministry of Defense is also trying to purchase eight comparably modern fighters to start replacing its MIG-29 fighter fleet.[127]

Overall, the capabilities of the Bulgarian Armed Forces are limited by a lack of systems and the outdatedness of existing ones as well as compatibility issues with NATO; however, they still can be employed jointly with partners and can have significant marginal effect.

D.   UKRAINE

Ukraine is the country affected by direct and indirect Russian aggression, including in the maritime domain, as already discussed in Chapter II. Annexation of Crimea and violent conflict orchestrated by Moscow is pushing Kyiv to seek more cooperation with the West and to support all initiatives, which intend at least somehow to limit the freedom of action of Moscow. As a result, the policies and perception of threats and security vision of the country have changed dramatically, and the new military doctrine of the country, signed by the President Poroshenko in 2015, is entirely focused on utilizing all of the resources of the state to counter Russia.[128] In April 2016, President Poroshenko, after a meeting with his Romanian counterpart, announced that he is supporting the creation of a standing Black Sea naval taskforce of NATO to replace

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125 Ibid., 14.

126 "Bulgarian Navy to Get Two New Ships by 2022," *Reuters*, March 31, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-bulgaria-defence-ships-idUSKCN0WX20B.

127"Bulgaria Seeks to Buy Eight Fighter Jets," Reuters, December 9, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/bulgaria-defence-jets-idUSL5N1E44J4.

128"Указ Президента України №555/2015 Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 2 вересня 2015 року "Про нову редакцію Воєнної доктрини України" [Decree of the President of Ukraine №555 / 2015 on the Decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine on September 2, 2015 "A New Edition of the Military Doctrine of Ukraine"], Президент України [President of Ukraine], 2015, http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/5552015-19443.

BLACKSEAFOR and other formats of cooperation in the region, which are too obsolete to face new realities after the annexation of Crimea.[129]

The military resources of Ukraine that are usable on the Black Sea are quite limited right now. In 2014, the Ukrainian Navy lost almost all its fighting capable ships during the Russian occupation of Crimea. Only Ukraine's flagship, the frigate *Hetman Sagaidachny*, survived the Russian takeover because it was on its deployment outside of the Black Sea at the time of occupation.[130] Some of the captured ships were returned by Russia; nevertheless, most of the Ukrainian Navy assets are obsolete and have low combat readiness.[131] Loss of the major Ukrainian Navy bases is also a serious problem in terms of employing naval capabilities. From the military perspective, the geographical locations of Odessa and Mariupol are not comparable with Crimean ports. They are vulnerable and almost open to further Russian maritime aggression. To counterbalance the loss of Crimean ports, $100 mln were allocated for the construction of a new port in Odessa.[132]

Surface warfare capabilities of the navy basically consist of the flagship frigate *Hetman Sagaidachny* with displacement of 3000 tons, no mid- and long-range missile capabilities, and one Ka-27 helicopter on the deck. The Ukrainian Navy also possesses a Grisha-class corvette and two small missile boats all equipped with Termit missiles (range 80 km, or 50 nmi). Air force capabilities are quite robust on paper. Its core consists of 82 MiG-29 Fulcrum, 40 Su-27 Flanker, 34 Su-24 Fencer, and 28 Su-25 Frogfoot aircraft, which is a substantial amount of air power by any standard.[133]

[129] "Ukraine and Romania Stand for Establishment of Flotilla under NATO Auspices to Enhance Security in Black Sea Region," President of Ukraine, April 21, 2016, http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-rumuniya-vistupayut-za-stvorennya-flotiliyi-pid-37013

[130] Tom Waldwyn, "Tom Waldwyn: Ukraine's Navy—One Year after the Seizure of Crimea," *Military Balance* (blog), April 17, 2015, https://www.iiss.org/en/militarybalanceblog/blogsections/2015-090c/april-6dca/ukraines-navy-8311.

[131] Franklin Holcomb and ISW Russia/Ukraine Team, "The Order of Battle of the Ukrainian Armed Forces: A Key Component in European Security," The Institute for the Study of War, December 9, 2016, http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/12/the-order-of-battle-of-ukrainian-armed.html.

[132] Waldwyn, "Tom Waldwyn: Ukraine's Navy—One Year after the Seizure of Crimea."

[133] "Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia," *Military Balance* 116, no. 1 (2016): 163–210, doi: 10.1080/04597222.2016.1127566.

However, with low flight hours (40 hours per year) and a history of huge differences between the capabilities on paper and on the ground (or in the air, in this particular situation), the readiness of the Ukrainian Air Force is questionable. It does, though, have tremendous potential.

E.   GEORGIA

Georgia is a country often affected by the Russian military aggression, including from the Black Sea. Before 2008, Russia was covertly supporting separatist movements in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in 2008, Russia directly invaded Georgia, occupying its separatist regions. It recognized their independence and built military bases on their territories.[134] Moscow employed the Black Sea Fleet and sunk small and outdated Georgian Navy vessels near the major port of Poti.[135]

As mentioned in Chapter II, Georgia announced its intentions of joining NATO in 1999. The integration process accelerated after the Rose Revolution in 2003, which brought apro-Western government to power. After the war with Russia, Georgia has continued to take steps toward the integration. Directly after the war, the NATO-Georgian Commission was established, and the country receives the Annual National Program (ANP), which helps Georgia to move gradually toward the alliance. At the NATO Summit in Wales (2014), Georgia received a substantial package that included enhanced cooperation and help in defense capacity-building, training, education, and NATO-compatibility improvement. A team of advisors was sent to Georgia, where the Training and Evaluation Centre as well as a defense institution building school have been established.

Georgia is an active contributor to NATO operations. Its participation started in 1999 when Georgia sent a company-size unit to Kosovo (KFOR). From 2001, Georgia was part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and after the war with Russia, even became one of the largest non-NATO contributors with approximately two

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[134] Jim Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. RL34618) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 2–8, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf.

[135] Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and Georgia War*, 41–42.

battalion-size units in the most dangerous southern regions. Georgian Armed Forces are still part of the ongoing "Resolute Support" mission, financially supporting, advising, and assisting Afghan National Security Forces. Currently Georgia is contributing a company-size unit to the NATO Response Force.[136] Georgia also participated in the operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003 to 2008, sending a full infantry brigade, which made the country the third largest contributor after the United States and the United Kingdom.[137]

Black Sea security is a highly important issue for Georgia's security. The National Security Concept of Georgia emphasizes the role of the Black Sea for strategic importance to the country as a transit corridor between Europe and Asia. According to the document, "Georgia's Black Sea ports, the Baku-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipelines, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline are already active and strategically important projects. Georgia is determined to ensure the effective functioning of these existing projects and to develop prospective new ones."[138] Part of the Georgian Black Sea shore, the region of Abkhazia, is currently occupied by Russia and constitutes a major security threat for the country. Georgia is actively participating in NATO discussions about increased allied presence in the Black Sea. The President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili on meeting with the Secretary General of NATO expressed Georgia's willingness to work with alliance in efforts to secure the eastern part of the Black Sea.[139] The minister of the Foreign Affairs also expressed the readiness of Georgia to "continue its contributions to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, and of the Black Sea region as its integral part."[140]

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[136] "Relations with Georgia," NATO, last modified November 23, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm.

[137] Koba Liklikadze, "Iraq: As Third-Largest Contingent, Georgia Hopes to Show Its Worth," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 10, 2007, http://www.rferl.org/a/1078614.html.

[138] "National Security Concept of Georgia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, accessed February 26, 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.ge/MainNav/ForeignPolicy/NationalSecurityConcept.aspx?lang=en-US.

[139] "Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili," NATO, last modified September 8, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_134909.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[140] "Tbilisi Hails NATO's Growing Presence in Eastern Europe, Black Sea Region," *Civil Georgia*, October 27, 2016, http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29568.

From a military standpoint, the capabilities of Georgia that can be used on the Black Sea are highly limited. In 2009, after the war with Russia when Georgia lost most of its naval assets, the Georgian Navy merged with the Coast Guard and now the country has no military naval organization. The Georgian Coast Guard has 21 small boats with no significant missile capabilities. The 12 Su-25s might be used on the Black Sea, as they are mostly upgraded ones with modern avionics and communication systems compatible with NATO.[141]

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[141] "Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia," 184.

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VI.   U.S.-NATO BLACK SEA STRATEGY EVALUATION

A.   DESCRIPTION OF NATO/US BLACK SEA STRATEGY

The Black Sea is the NATO Sea. NATO members (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey) and two partners (Georgia and Ukraine) have access to it. So, it is natural for the United States and NATO to have an interest in the region, but the Black Sea basin was not at the top of NATO's agenda since the Cold War. As mentioned in Chapter IV, in the 1990s, because of the decline of Russia, NATO and the United States felt comfortable having Turkey as a major guarantor of their interests in the region. Except for BLACKSEAFOR and later in 2004 Operation Black Sea Harmony (the continuation of NATO Operation Active Endeavor),[142] there were no significant NATO initiatives in the Black Sea. Even those activities were mostly formal and had no real military strategic importance. From 1997, the United States was conducting an annual maritime exercise called Sea Breeze bilaterally with Ukraine. Other NATO and littoral countries were participating as well; however, participants were changing from year to year.[143]

Russian aggression against Georgia brought the Black Sea back onto the radars of NATO. Right after the war, on August 21, 2008, four vessels of the Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) entered the Black Sea. They conducted port visits and joint exercises with Romania and Bulgaria. NATO stated that the visit was planned much earlier before the start of the Russo-Georgian War.[144] Moscow loudly expressed its concerns about the activation of NATO in the Black Sea and even accused United States ships of bringing military equipment to Georgia. Russia also claimed that ships violated the duration of stay (21 days) allowed by the Montreux Convention.[145] NATO

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[142] "BLACKSEAFOR," Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[143] "Sea Breeze 2016," U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa / U.S. 6th Fleet, accessed March 4, 2017, http://www.c6f.navy.mil/forces-efforts/sea-breeze-2016.

[144] "NATO Ships in Black Sea on Routine Visit, Unrelated to Georgia Crisis," NATO, last modified January 5, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_43524.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[145] Andrew E. Kramer, "NATO Ships in Black Sea Raise Alarms in Russia," *New York Times*, August 27, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/world/europe/28russia.html.

categorically denied the Russian claims.[146] In 2009, Sea Breeze was planned to be of the largest scale in its history. Russia increased pressure on the regional actors, including Ukraine. Pro-Russian forces in the Ukrainian parliament declined a draft law giving foreign forces the right to land in Ukraine (in accordance with the constitution of the country, which requires legislative approval each time foreign military forces are going to enter Ukraine), and exercises were canceled. Almost the same happened in 2006, when U.S. forces landed without formal legislative approval. Pro-Russian nationalist groups in Crimea organized protests and blocked U.S. military in the buildings. The exercise was canceled and the next ones were relocated from extremely pro-Russian Crimea to more moderate Odessa.[147] In 2010, Sea Breeze was again of quite large scale. Thirteen countries and dozens of ships were participating in maneuvers intended to improve counterpiracy operations and interoperability.[148]

In 2011, Breeze 2011— an exercise separate from Sea Breeze—was hosted by the Romanian Navy with participation of SNMG2 units, including several vessels from Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and the United States. Exercises included:

> Tasks related to the implementation of options for command of multinational forces, interaction between the Navy and other government institutions and non-governmental organizations in the event of a crisis response operation in a multinational environment, response activities aimed at mitigation of the consequences of terrorist attacks (fire-fighting and oil spill response), delivering humanitarian aid to people in distress in the event of natural disasters, liberating a ship captured by pirates, conducting joint maritime search and rescue operations, and providing humanitarian aid to and accepting asylum seeking foreign evacuees into the territory of the country.[149]

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[146] "NATO Ships Complete Their Visit to the Black Sea," NATO, last modified January 5, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_43538.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[147] Vladimir Socor, "U.S.-led "Sea Breeze" Combined Exercise Canceled in Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6, no. 120 (2009), https://jamestown.org/program/u-s-led-sea-breeze-combined-exercise-canceled-in-ukraine/.

[148] "Ukraine and NATO Begin Sea Breeze Military Exercise," Atlantic Council, July 12, 2010, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/ukraine-and-nato-begin-sea-breeze-military-exercise.

[149] David Taylor, "SNMG2 Completes Exercise Breeze 2011," Defense Video Imagery Distribution System, July 25, 2011, https://www.dvidshub.net/news/74332/snmg2-completes-exercise-breeze-2011.

Sea Breeze was also conducted as planned later the same year.[150] Until 2014 and the annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea routine was quite monotonous and for the most part was based on the Sea Breeze and Breeze exercises and port visits by non-littoral NATO navy ships.

NATO and the United States started activation on the Black Sea after the annexation of Crimea. A number of U.S. and NATO ships were sent on a rotational basis to sustain permanent presence in the Black Sea to deter Russia's further aggression and show commitment to the alliance members and partners. Moscow was angered by the decision and started acting provocatively against NATO ships to demonstrate its own military superiority in the region. In April 2014, a Russian Su-24 bomber plane was buzzing the USS DDG-75 Donald Cook for 90 minutes.[151] Later, in September, the Canadian Navy frigate HMCS Toronto (FFH-333) faced similar action by Russian aviation.[152] The annual exercise Black Sea Breeze became one of the major tools of the United States and NATO for the show of force in the region. In September 2014, shortly after Russian annexation of Crimea, Sea Breeze 2014 started, with the participation of "Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, Turkey, and the U.S., as well as three ships from Standing NATO Maritime Group TWO Task Unit 02 (SNMG2 TU.02): Canadian Halifax-class frigate HMCS Toronto (FFH 333); Spanish frigate ESPS Almirante Juan De Borbon; and Romanian frigate ROS Regele Ferdinand."[153] The next year, in 2015, 11 nations participated in the drill and it was more complex in comparison with previous year.[154] From that point, NATO exercises started to shift from naval interdiction and anti-

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150 "Ukraine: Active Phase of Sea Breeze 2011 Exercise Begins," *Naval Today*, accessed March 4, 2017, http://navaltoday.com/2011/06/16/ukraine-active-phase-of-sea-breeze-2011-exercise-begins/.

151 Sam LaGrone, "Russian Fighter Buzzes U.S. Destroyer in Black Sea, "*U.S. Naval Institute News*, last modified April 15, 2014, https://news.usni.org/2014/04/14/russian-fighter-buzzes-u-s-destroyer-black-sea.

152 Sam LaGrone, "NATO Ship in Black Sea Buzzed by Russian Planes, Russia Disputes Account," *U.S. Naval Institute News*, September 9, 2014, https://news.usni.org/2014/09/09/nato-ship-black-sea-buzzed-russian-planes-russia-disputes-account.

153 Greg Hicks, "Statement on Exercise Sea Breeze 2014," United States European Command, September 5, 2014, http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/26812/statement-on-exercise-sea-breeze-2014.

154 Sam LaGrone, "U.S., Ukraine Exercise Sea Breeze Begins in Black Sea, Russia Promises to Observe," *U.S. Naval Institute News*, September 1, 2015, https://news.usni.org/2015/09/01/u-s-ukraine-exercise-sea-breeze-begins-in-black-sea-russia-promises-to-observe.

terrorist/piracy operations to countering conventional, traditional maritime threats. In March, SNMG2 ships arrived at the Black Sea to conduct drills with Turkish, Bulgarian, and Romanian navies, and perform various tasks, including "simulated anti-air and anti-submarine warfare exercises, as well as simulated small boat attacks and basic ship handling manoeuvers … to undertake any mission NATO might require to meet its obligations for collective defense."[155] In May 2015, Romania launched a joint naval exercise with the United States and Bulgaria covering a wide spectrum of tasks, including "submarine search and discovery, procedures for identifying and following air targets, combat exercises against maritime mines, surface combat exercises and live fire exercises."[156] In July 2015, Romania started an anti-submarine exercise with Turkish, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian navy ships.[157] The number of participating countries, personnel, and tasks performed increased in 2016. NATO and the U.S. government as well as independent information sources covered the drill with open intentions of making a demonstration of commitments from the NATO side to the allies and partners in the region, as well as to show a strong stance against Russia.[158] It is important to mention that a shore landing operation was performed during exercises by 350 U.S. Marines.[159] Sea Shield 2016 also became more oriented on the real security challenges caused by the Russian build-up. As in 2015, the exercise was concentrated on anti-submarine warfare.[160]

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[155] "SNMG2 Begins Operations in the Black Sea," NATO, March 4, 2015, https://www.shape.nato.int/snmg2-begins-operations-in-the-black-sea.

[156] Paul Ciocoiu, "Romanian Navy Stages this Year's First Major Exercise in Black Sea," *Balkan Defense*, May 21, 2015, http://www.balkandefense.com/romanian-navy-stages-this-years-first-major-exercise-in-black-sea/.

[157] Cem Devrim Yaylali, "Sea Shield 2015 Naval Exercise, "*Bosphorus Naval News* (blog), accessed March 4, 2017, https://turkishnavy.net/2015/07/21/sea-shield-2015-naval-exercise/ .

[158] "NATO and Partner Country Forces Participate in Exercise Sea Breeze," NATO Allied Maritime Command, August 1, 2016, http://www.mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2016/nato-and-partner-country-forces-participate-in-exercise-sea-breeze.aspx.

[159] "Sea Breeze 2016 Opening Ceremony Held in Odessa, Ukraine," U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa / U.S. 6th Fleet, July 25, 2016, http://www.c6f.navy.mil/news/sea-breeze-2016-opening-ceremony-held-odessa-ukraine.

[160] "US Destroyer Joins Romanian Exercise Sea Shield," *Naval Today*, February 9, 2017, http://navaltoday.com/2017/02/09/us-destroyer-joins-romanian-exercise-sea-shield/.

All the components of the military activation described were based on the political consensus and decisions made during NATO summits. In communiques from the NATO summits of 2012 (Chicago)[161] and 2014 (Wales),[162] the Black Sea was mentioned just two and three times respectively in one paragraph of each communique. Considering that communiques are usually the best information source of NATO's positions toward certain problems and regions, the communique from the Warsaw summit (2016) reflects the biggest shift. In that summit's communique, the Black Sea was mentioned eight times in five different paragraphs, calling it strategically important for the first time after the collapse of the Soviet Union. NATO clearly stated its concern regarding Russian activities on the Black Sea in section 10 of the Warsaw Summit declaration, where build-up of Russia on the Black Sea is listed as a destabilizing action in two geographic areas of the NATO border—the Black Sea region by itself and Eastern Mediterranean.[163] As mentioned in the communique, NATO intends to assess "options for a strengthened NATO air and maritime presence."[164] This communique provides the most up-to-date, credibly written, and documented information about the perceptions, intentions, and goals of NATO in the region:

> We face evolving challenges in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, the North Atlantic, as well as in the Mediterranean, which are of strategic importance to the Alliance and to our partners. Russia continues to strengthen its military posture, increase its military activities, deploy new high-end capabilities, and challenge regional security…. We will continue to address the implications for NATO of developments in the [Black Sea] region and take them into account in the Alliance's approaches and policies. We will continue to support, as appropriate, regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability. We

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161 "Chicago Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012," NATO, last modified August 1, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en.

162 "Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales," NATO, last modified September 26, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

163 Ibid.

164 "Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016," NATO, last modified August 3, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

will also strengthen our dialogue and cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine in this regard.[165]

After the declaration of the intentions from the Warsaw Summit, NATO officials were constantly repeating the words from the communique. Yet, there is no clear answer to the question of what strategy the United States and NATO will use to ensure the security of the regional allies. At a press conference with Georgian Prime Minister, Secretary General Stoltenberg answered a similar question, reaffirming that the Black Sea has strategic importance for the alliance and declared that NATO is "working on that with our military planners now to decide exactly how that is going to take place and we also continue to support regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral States to ensure security and stability in the region. And for NATO and NATO Allies it is important to have close dialogue, close contact with partner countries like Ukraine and Georgia."[166] In February 2017, following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defense Ministers, the NATO Secretary General announced that the alliance had made a decision about Black Sea naval measures, which included "an increased NATO naval presence in the Black Sea for enhanced training, exercises and situational awareness, and a maritime coordination function for our Standing Naval Forces when operating with other Allied forces in the Black Sea region."[167] This statement is not specific and still does not give a clear framework for the new strategy, but a couple of conclusions can be drawn according to all the information presented in Chapters IV and V, including the last statement of the Secretary General.

B.   ASSESSED GOALS AND STEPS OF THE U.S.-NATO STRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA

The aggregation of steps taken by NATO and the United States in the Black Sea is difficult to call a strategy. At most, it is the sum of the options available at the moment,

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[165] Ibid.

[166] "Joint Press Point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili," NATO, last modified September 7, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_134713.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[167] "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Defense Ministers," NATO, last modified February 16, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_141340.htm.

and they are affordable politically. But, these steps do not constitute a system to strengthen the security environment, which would need some capital investment. Over time, though, such a system would work autonomously and pay for itself. By contrast, the option exercised by NATO and the United States is not efficient. In the long run, these disparate steps cannot address the goals of NATO in the region and will have only a limited and temporary impact. Steps need to be repeated on a regular basis; otherwise, they lose their effect right away once they are complete. NATO's goals on the Black Sea can be summarized by the following:

1.   To ensure littoral NATO members that the alliance is willing and capable of defending its members;

2.   To counterbalance Russia's increased capabilities with rotational maritime presence;

3.   To build a regional partnership among NATO member and partner states to deter Russia through the political and military steps taken outside the region.

NATO and the United States have had almost no strategy concerning the Black Sea since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 forced NATO and the United States to draft some contingency plans concerning the region. From 2008 to 2014, NATO and the United States based their strategies on sending warships on an occasional basis and conducting joint naval exercises with littoral states, mainly alliance members. These moves were intended to send a signal to Moscow that they have the willingness and tools to influence the political situation in the region and that Russia did not have full freedom of action. After the annexation of Crimea, NATO and the United States decided to put more pressure on Russia and started thinking about a new approach because the old one had obviously failed. The first stage of the post-Crimea strategy was to intensify the 2008–2014 one in terms of quantitative and qualitative measurements. More recently, NATO started drawing a strategy that is more complex. The current strategy includes:

1.   Intensified land, air, and naval exercises in the Black Sea and littoral NATO members;

2.   Rotation of U.S. and other non-littoral NATO member warships in the Black Sea;

3.   Deployment of allied air and land assets in the littoral member states;

4.   Intensified interaction with littoral partner states.

So, steps taken by the United States and NATO are based mostly on rotational naval presence. Naval presence in some areas and military environments might be the best solution and the best way to project power, but in the Black Sea, in light of the current security arrangements, these steps might be ineffective, inefficient, and even counterproductive. The naval presence of the United States and NATO in the Black Sea currently is limited by:

- Montreux Convention, which limits the number and tonnage of ships, as well as the duration of stay for non-littoral navies;

- Increasing tensions in relations between Turkey and the United States/EU, which might lead Ankara to stricter regulation of the Straits;

- Advantage in range of Russia in advanced shore, ship, and aircraft based anti-ship missiles and air defense system (A2/AD bubble);

- Fragile political consensus because of countries vulnerable to the economic and energy tools of Russia;

- Lack of assigned coordinating body and agreed actual strategy.

So, U.S. and NATO policy toward the region has a couple of problems, which makes it less effective. Basically, the new strategy is more concentrated but still nearly a copy of the old one, which already failed in 2008 and 2014. It is not tailored and, as previously mentioned, is mostly just the sum of the tools available. Turkey is also a highly important factor. Further, NATO moves quite slowly as an organization; it needs a lot of procedures, time, and consensus to make important decisions. The problems of Turkey will likely slow them down even more in regard to the Black Sea. Sending more ships and even creating a Black Sea naval task force will give Moscow the opportunity to appeal the aggressive policies of NATO and NATO's creation of offensive capabilities in the Black Sea to attack Russia. It is highly probable that Moscow will also use the Montreux Convention to constantly criticize the West and to gain the moral advantage of victim in the international arena.

From the political and informational perspective, a demonstration of the flag is quite a bold statement, but from a military standpoint it is ineffective because of the small size of the Black Sea, which restricts maritime maneuver and a robust Russian A2/AD bubble that allows Moscow to sink basically every vessel in the Black Sea. In Chapter VII this thesis presents an alternative strategy that might be more suited to the existing political and military situation in the region.

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VII. RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR THE UNITED STATES AND NATO IN THE BLACK SEA

As already mentioned, NATO has several goals in the Black Sea region: to counterbalance Russia, to reassure regional members that the alliance is going to defend them, and to build partnerships with non-NATO countries. It is important to achieve those goals with minimal financial and material resources, with minimal political losses, and without giving Russia an opportunity to portray itself as a victim of aggressive NATO policies. Military effectiveness is another important aspect to be considered alongside political and economic feasibility. The strategy proposed in this chapter is tailored to the reality in the region and is designed to answer all those requirements. The proposed strategy is based on the analysis conducted in the thesis.

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY

As mentioned earlier, the A2/AD strategy is defensive by its nature, so the actor who is using it feels more comfortable being near the home base, waiting for the enemy to attack in order to gain necessary advantage of prepared positions, logistics, etc. Countering A2/AD primarily by deployment of frigates and corvettes of non-littoral navies might be interpreted as an aggressive move by an outside power against one who is in a defensive position. From a political standpoint, it might be an uncomfortable position for NATO. From military standpoint, deployment of vessels equipped with shorter range missiles and less sophisticated air defense systems than those of the Russian bubble, deployed on non-permanent basis, with no clear chain of command, SOPs, and lack of compatibility, highly dependent on a good will of Turkey, which is quite vulnerable against Russia, will not fully address the needs of the United States and NATO. There are only 500 km between Istanbul and Sevastopol, so every ship passing through the Turkish Straits is a potential target for Russian anti-ship missiles. This fact makes a navy-based strategy almost useless from the very beginning.

Based on the assumption that the United States and NATO have no offensive goals in the region, intend to restore military balance in the region and ensure friends and

allies by whom they will be defended, defensive measures could be more efficient, effective, and long-term oriented. As already mentioned, Russian A2/AD is strategically defensive, but operationally offensive. Once more, based on the assumption about the defensive intentions of NATO in the region, it is possible to counter Russia with operationally defensive, but in a strategic way offensive strategy. Russia is basing its A2/AD strategy on the assumption that it will be countered by offensive capabilities, which will help Moscow to exploit all the gains from it.

To avoid that outcome, it is important to consider how Russia can be countered by the same strategy; i.e., by the creation of a chain of A2/AD bubbles around its own. This strategy consists of complex steps coordinated between littoral NATO member and partner countries. In short, littoral countries, with the help of NATO and the United States, must create a Black Sea Defense Coordination Center (BSDCC), establish a network for command and control, share all the sensor and intelligence data available concerning Black Sea security in real time through this network at the BSDCC, acquire modern long-range land-based mobile anti-ship missiles, and dedicate those missiles as well as suitable aviation and most naval assets to the common Black Sea security goals.

The BSDCC is envisioned to serve as an advance military command center, mainly manned by the officers of participating countries on a rotational basis. The commander of the BSDCC will also be appointed on the rotational basis from each NATO member country. The Center must also have a staff of permanently assigned officers who will be responsible for long-term planning. Assets and units need to be assigned to the BSDCC on a rotational basis under joint operational control. Commanders of the assigned units will receive orders from the commander of joint forces through the national-level commander. Each bubble must be autonomous with its own national-level command center and should have the ability to conduct operations independently. Thus, this system likely will have two levels of command, joint national and joint regional. National-level command centers will have to integrate all national capabilities assigned to the BSDCC and provide command and control of the units based on the tasks assigned by the joint forces commander. The national-level commander will also be responsible for training, equipping, overseeing logistical support, and manning of

the assigned units. Every country should be able to permanently or temporarily withdraw own unit from the joint command at any time based on political or security concerns. Further, they should be permitted to withdraw on short notice or without any notice in case of national emergency. Integrated network should be able to provide awareness through real-time information concerning air and sea space in the Black Sea and live picture exchange from all the sensors and data links of participating countries. The integrated network also should have the ability to disseminate information to all the units and assets assigned to the center and to provide the basis for command and control architecture for the new task force.

The steps described will create a number of A2/AD bubbles in the Black Sea, which will make most of the water mass covered by the capabilities not friendly to Russia. Creation of the chain of A2/AD bubbles around the Russian bubble in Crimea will serve several goals:

1.   Restriction of the freedom of action for Russia in the Black Sea;

2.   Creation of robust individual defenses for littoral NATO member and partner states;

3.   Enhanced regional cooperation and increased control of NATO over the region as whole.

Clearly, it would be impossible to do all the work at once or to create such a sophisticated system overnight. Thus, it will be better to break down tasks and make a step-by-step plan to gradually integrate all the actors and systems into the joint network. Tasks might be divided into three main stages:

1.   Short term (1–2 years):

    a.   Creation of the BSDCC (preferably based in Romania, because this country has experience hosting NATO units and is a politically reliable partner) including Romania, Bulgaria, and if possible, Turkey. Invitation of liaison officers from Ukraine and Georgia will also has to be part of a short term plan;
    b.   Creation of the integrated network and framework of the regular intelligence information exchange format, including HUMINT, ELINT, SIGINT products;
    c.   Beginning of regular joint air exercises in the Black Sea of NATO member littoral states;

d. Continuation of the joint maritime effort mainly between Romania and Bulgaria, also with Turkey and Ukraine;

e. Initiation of political and military-to-military dialog to include Georgia and Ukraine in the Black Sea defense coordination center.

2. Midterm (3–5 years):

a. Integration of the littoral partner states in the Black Sea defense coordination center;

b. Connecting the littoral partner states to the integrated network;

c. Procurement of robust, long-range (200 km or more), land-based anti-ship missiles (preferably mobile) by littoral NATO members. NATO should help littoral partner states to acquire and operate preferably the same systems through existing partnership formats; assistance should include sending advisory teams to help in the acquisition planning process;

d. Procurement of mid- to long-range air defense systems to littoral NATO members. NATO should help littoral partner states to acquire and operate preferably the same systems through existing partnership formats; assistance should include sending advisory teams to help in the acquisition planning process;

e. Equipping NATO member littoral nations with shore-based air and sea radars for better intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and C4I. NATO should help littoral partner states to acquire and operate preferably the same systems through existing partnership formats; assistance should include sending advisory teams to help in the acquisition planning process;

f. Continuation of joint maritime effort, mainly between Romania and Bulgaria, also with Turkey and Ukraine;

3. Long term (5–8 years):

a. Transformation of the BSDCC into a strong regional cooperation platform;

b. Gradual integration of all the systems dedicated to the Black Sea defense coordination center (aviation, naval vessels, land-based radars, shore-based air defense systems, anti-ship missiles) into one integrated network;

c. Conduct full scale joint military war games of BSDCC;

d. During naval modernization programs, concentration on deploying longer range anti-ship and cruise missiles on existing platforms rather than on building new expensive ships. Concentration on fast attack smaller platforms with long-range anti-ship missiles.

B.   PROS AND CONS OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY

The described strategy will have couple of obstacles to be overcome:

- Turkey might refuse to join the center dealing with Black Sea security with its headquarters somewhere outside Turkey, due to its status as the holder of the Turkish Straits and also its current political tensions with the United States and EU;

- It will be problematic to define rules of engagement and responsibilities in case of engagement;

- It will be challenging to draw clear command and control structure and command authorities;

- It will be risky for NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine because of the possibility of being involved in a confrontation with Russia.

Despite these problems, the initiative will probably have many advantages:

- It will help NATO to show Russia that NATO has real combat-ready and effective capabilities in the region;

- It will need much less direct effort from non-littoral NATO members;

- One player, such as Turkey, will not have decisive leverage over the project;

- It will need much fewer resources in comparison to building up a huge naval task force;

- Mobile air defense and coastal defense missile systems will be much less vulnerable than mid- and large-size frigates and destroyers because of their mobility, and their ability to use land terrain makes them less visible to the adversary;

- It will be comparatively easy to manage with a multinational naval task force;

- Undecided countries will be more likely to join in comparison to joining the standing naval task force because of the purely defensive nature of the project;

- Russia will have much less to complain about and a much less favorable situation for information warfare;

- Gradual and step-by-step creation of the A2/AD bubbles around the Russian bubble will not make it non-operational but will highly restrict Russia's freedom of action in the Black Sea;

- The project will be an investment in the future because regional NATO members will significantly improve self-defense capabilities;

- The A2/AD bubbles of each country will work autonomously even in case of disintegration of the project;

- Exclusion of one or two states from the project will not make it non-operational and ineffective, and might be partially compensated for by more active efforts of the remaining states;
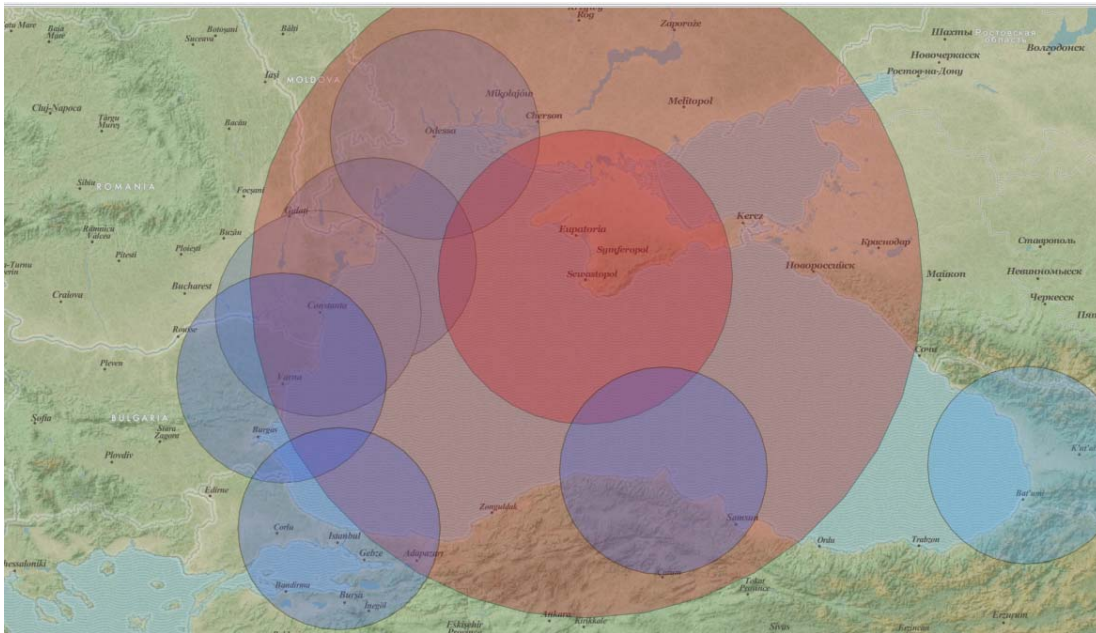
- The project will have the potential of becoming a strong regional platform.

Figure 4.   Proposed Counter-A2/AD Strategy[168]

Procurement of the recommended missiles also represents a challenging step. According to an analysis of the land-based and mobile anti-ship missiles currently on the market and available for NATO countries based on political factors, there are two major candidates for the project. Both of them have more or less the same range of 200 km, and both of them are produced by a Scandinavian country. The Swedish RBS-15 MK3 and the Norwegian Naval Strike Missile are in the inventory of a couple of NATO countries.

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[168] Visualization is based on geospatial analysis by author based on the assumption that all littoral states will procure anti-ship missiles with a range of 200km and all littoral states will participate in the project.

Although these missiles possess different modifications and launch platforms, they are compatible with NATO systems.[169] Table 2 is providing further information about that.

Table 2.   Selected Anti-Ship Missiles Capable of Being Launched from Ground-Based Platforms[170]

Designation	Country of Origin	Range (km)	Guidance	Exported to	Launch Platform
MM-38 Exocet	France	40	INS, active radar	Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, South Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia	Ship and ground
MM-40 Exocet	France	70	INS, active radar	Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, South Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan	Ship and ground
BrahMos PJ-10	India/ Russia	300 or 500	INS, GPS, active and passive radar	Expected to be in South Africa, Chile, Brazil, and a host of countries in the Middle East and Africa	Ship, air, ground, and submarine
Otomat/Teseo	Italy	60–180	INS, datalink, active radar	Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela	Ship and ground
ASM-2 (Type 93, Type 96)	Japan	100	INS, datalink, IIR		Air and ground
YJ-2/Eagle Strike/CSS-N-8 Saccade/C-802	China	120	INS, active radar	Iran, Pakistan	Ship, air, ground, and submarine
SSC-3 Styx	Russia	80	Autopilot, radio altimeter, active radar/IIR	Croatia, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, Vietnam, Yemen	Ground
RBS-15	Sweden	100–200	INS, radio altimeter, active radar	Croatia, Finland, Germany, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia	Ship, air, and ground
Hsiung Feng 3/ HF-3/Male Bee 3	Taiwan	130	Inertial, active radar with infrared seeker		Ship and ground
Naval Strike Missile	Norway	3–200		Poland	Ship and ground

NOTE: INS = inertial navigation system. IIR = imaging infrared. GPS = Global Positioning System.

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[169] Kelly K. Terrence, et al., "Employing Land-Based Anti-Ship Missiles in the Western Pacific," RAND Corporation, 2013, 22, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/TR1300/TR1321/RAND_TR1321.pdf.

[170] Source: Kelly K. Terrence, et al., "Employing Land-Based Anti-Ship Missiles in the Western Pacific," RAND Corporation, 2013, 22, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/TR1300/TR1321/RAND_TR1321.pdf.

In terms of anti-ship missiles, Russia currently has the clear advantage in comparison to NATO. The proposed strategy will partially rectify this imbalance based on the joint effort. Implementation of the proposed strategy will be a big step forward for NATO in achieving security on one of its most vulnerable flanks. Most important, NATO will be able to accomplish this by using the regional capabilities. This strategy will ultimately constrain Russia's freedom of action in the Black Sea, which Moscow currently considers its sphere of influence. The ring of A2/AD bubbles will cover a significant portion of the Black Sea. Moreover, this strategy will also highly constrain Russian capabilities to project power beyond the Black Sea toward the Mediterranean, because Moscow will need to dedicate many more forces to preserve a favorable balance on the Black Sea.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Black Sea security was not the top priority for NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it never stopped being priority for Moscow. It is logical, therefore, that Russia has a much better planned and more detailed strategy toward the Black Sea than NATO does. The Black Sea and Crimea are essential for Russia's access to the outer world. That is why Russia has sought to control them for centuries. Russian build-up in Crimea is an enterprise of geopolitical character, the main idea of which is to employ robust A2/AD capabilities at least to preserve the status quo and restrict NATO power projection in the Black Sea. The Russian A2/AD strategy is primarily defensive from the strategic standpoint and offensive from the operational one. It is defensive against NATO, but offensive against its weaker neighbors. Anti-ship missile capabilities allow Russia to control almost the entire Black Sea and engage any target through layered weapon systems. Recent activation of NATO and the United States to restore balance on the Black Sea and reassure partners in the region that they are safe is quite spontaneous but a highly predictable move. Also, it is ineffective militarily due to the almost defenseless nature of large naval platforms against Russian anti-ship missiles. The move is even less effective politically. Current NATO strategy is difficult to sustain due to Montreux Convention restrictions and the need for consensus among all NATO members. Russia is intelligently exploiting the differences inside the alliance and with its economic, energy, information, and intelligence means is influencing the decision making in NATO.

A regional strategy, which will build small A2/AD bubbles around the Russian bubble, can be more reliable and sustainable because it will be politically less risky and more realistic to implement as it will involve highly motivated parties. Moreover, it will not be a predictable step for Russia, which is most likely not ready for such a move. Not only would no country have veto power over it, but the strategy would remain operational even if some countries decided to leave the initiative.

From the military perspective the strategy will be much more effective than the existing one. Anti-ship missiles and air defense assets in combination with aviation for air space control and intelligence, and naval capabilities for filling the gaps left from

insufficient ranges of anti-ship missiles, will be much more effective than the mere presence of large ships, which are the perfect target for Russian missiles. Furthermore, these large ships have just one narrow corridor to enter the Black Sea, and this corridor is within range of Russian missiles. The Russian Navy will be highly constrained by the proposed ring of A2/AD bubbles that might cover even the Russian Navy's major port of Sevastopol. Participation of the NATO partners in the region will make this strategy much more effective for geographic reasons and will also make it more flexible.

As an added benefit, the BSDCC will serve to strengthen more than just the security environment of the Black Sea. Currently, the Russian Black Sea Fleet is also freely operating in the Mediterranean because it feels confident of its control of the Black Sea. The BSDCC will erode this feeling of security for Russia in the Black Sea and will negatively affect its operations in the Mediterranean as Russia draws more of its forces nearer the home port as it attempts to sustain favorable balance in the region. The proposed strategy can also serve a bigger purpose in a different way as well. It might well become an example of an alternative vision for countering A2/AD operations in the other regions of the world.

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